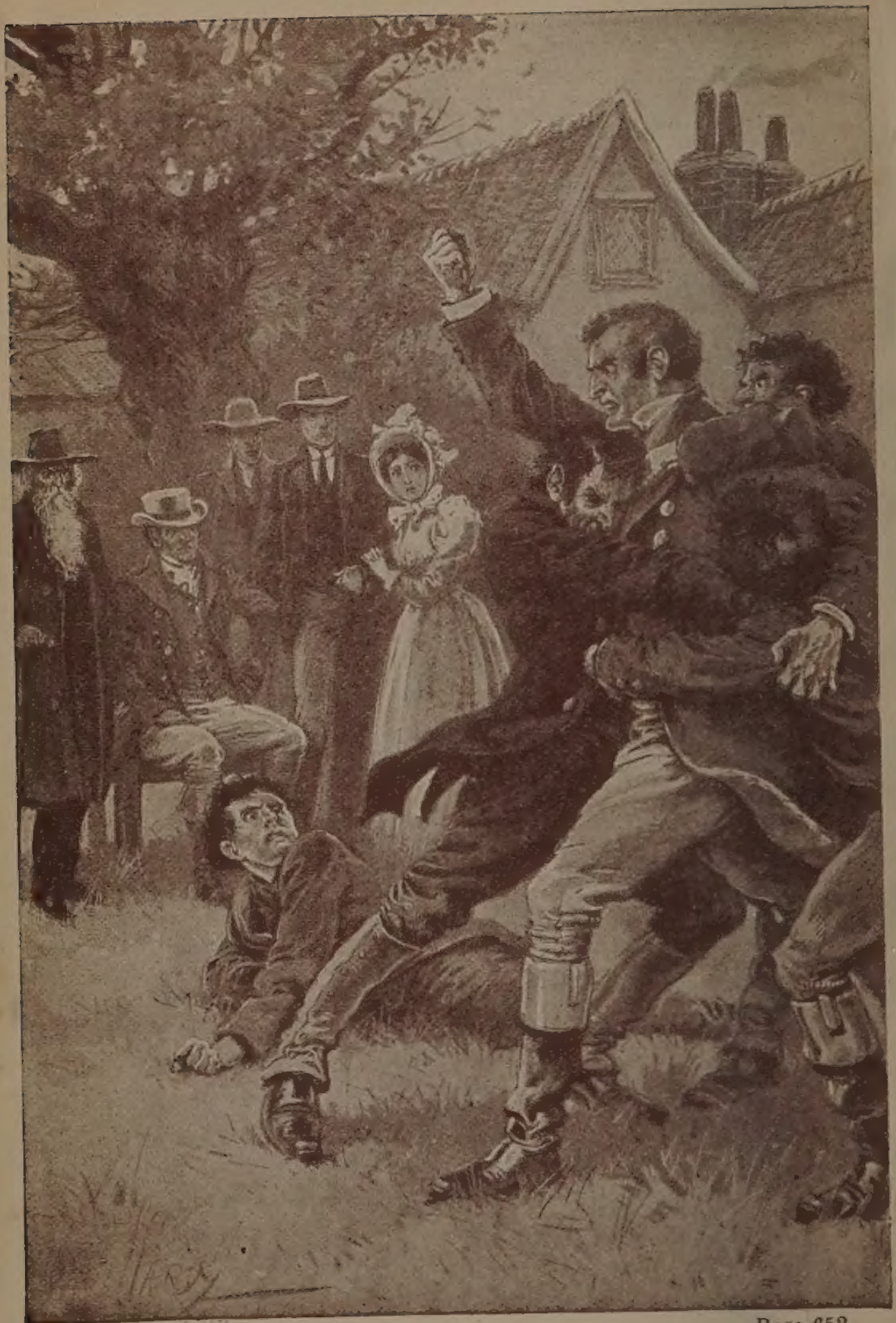


Frontispiece. N.T.L.

"You will never cage me!"

Page 652.

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND

CHARLES READE

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL HARDY

LONDON & GLASGOW
COLLINS' CLEAR-TYPE PRESS

THIS ATTEMPT AT A SOLID FICTION

IS WITH THEIR PERMISSION

DEDICATED TO

THE PRESIDENT, FELLOWS, AND DEMIES

OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD

BY A GRATEFUL SON OF

THAT ANCIENT, LEARNED, AND MOST

CHARITABLE HOUSE

"It is Never Too Late to Mend."

CHAPTER I.

GEORGE FIELDING cultivated a small farm in Berkshire.

This position is not so enviable as it was: years ago, the farmers of England, had they been as intelligent as other traders, could have purchased the English soil by means of the huge percentage it offered them.

But now, I grieve to say, a farmer must be as sharp as his neighbours, or like his neighbours he will break. What do I say? There are soils and situations where, in spite of intelligence and sobriety, he is almost sure to break; just as there are shops where the lively, the severe, the industrious, the lazy, are fractured alike.

This last fact I make mine by perambulating a certain great street every three months, and observing how name succeeds to name as wave to wave.

Readers hardened by *The Times* will not, perhaps, go so far as to weep over a body of traders for being reduced to the average condition of all other traders; but the individual trader, who fights for existence against unfair odds, is to be pitied whether his shop has plate-glass or a barn-door to it; and he is the more to be pitied when he is sober, intelligent, proud, sensitive, and unlucky.

George Fielding was all these, who, a few years ago, assisted by his brother William, tilled "The Grove"—as nasty a little farm as any in Berkshire.

Discontented as he was, the expression hereinbefore written would have seemed profane to young Fielding, for a farmer's farm and a sailor's ship have always something sacred in the sufferer's eyes, though one sends one to jail, and the other the other to Jones.

It was four hundred acres, all arable, and most of it poor, sour land. George's father had one hundred acres grass with it, but this had been separated six years ago.

As for its name, who can fathom country nomenclature? There was not a tree, nor even an old stump, to show for this word "Grove."

But in the country oral tradition still flourishes.

There had been trees in "The Grove," only the title had outlived the timber a few centuries.

On the morning of our tale, George Fielding might have been seen, near his own homestead, conversing with the Hon. Frank Winchester.

This gentleman was a character that will be common some day, but was nearly unique at the date of our story.

He had not an extraordinary intellect, but he had great natural gaiety, and under that he had enormous good sense; his good sense was really brilliant, he had a sort of universal healthy mind that I can't understand how people get.

He was deeply in love with a lady who returned his passion, but she was hopelessly out of his reach, because he had not much money or expectations; instead of sitting down railing, or sauntering about whining, what did me the Hon. Frank Winchester? He looked over England for the means of getting this money, and not finding it there, he surveyed the globe and selected Australia, where, they told him, a little money turns to a deal, instead of dissolving in the hand like a lozenge in the mouth, as it does in London.

So here was an earl's son (in this age of commonplace events) going to Australia, with five thousand pounds, as sheep-farmer and general speculator.

He was trying hard to persuade George Fielding to accompany him as bailiff or agricultural adviser and manager.

He knew the young man's value, but, to do him justice, his aim was not purely selfish; he was aware that Fielding had a bad bargain in "The Grove," and the farmer had saved his life at great personal risk one day that he was seized with cramp bathing in the turbid waters of Cleve millpool, and he wanted to serve him in return. This was not his first attempt of the kind, and but for one reason perhaps he might have succeeded.

George Fielding was uneasy, and groaned like a ship riding in a gale; but, like the same ship, he was fast by a double sheet-anchor, between the flukes of which you might have read two magic words—SUSANNA MERTON. Susanna was his cousin, daughter of Mr. Merton, a farmer well-to-do.

"You know me and I know you," said Mr. Winchester to George Fielding; "I must have somebody to put me in the way; stay with me one year, and after that I'll square accounts with you about that thundering millpool."

"Oh! Mr. Winchester," said George hastily, and blushing like fire, "that's an old story, sir; haven't you forgot that yet, sir?" with a sweet little half-cunning smile, that showed he was glad it was not forgotten.

"Not quite," replied the young gentleman drily; "you shall have five hundred sheep and a run for them, and we will both come home rich, and consequently respectable."

"It is a handsome offer, sir, and a kind offer, and like yourself, sir; but transplanting one of us," continued George, "dear me, sir, it's like taking up an oak-tree thirty years in the ground—besides—besides—did you ever notice my cousin Susanna, sir?"

"Notice her! why, do you think I am a heathen, and never go to the parish church? Miss Merton is a lovely girl; she sits in the pew by the pillar."

"Isn't she, sir?" said George.

Mr. Winchester endeavoured to turn this adverse topic in his favour; he made a remark that produced no effect at the time. He said, "People don't go to Australia to die—they go to Australia to make money, and come home and marry—and it is what you must do—this 'Grove' is a millstone round your neck. Will you have a cigar, farmer?"

George consented, premising, however, that hitherto he had never got beyond a yard of clay, and after drawing a puff or two he took the cigar from his mouth, and looking at it, said, "I say, sir! seems to me the fire is uncommon near the chimbly." Mr. Winchester laughed; he then asked George to show him the blacksmith's shop. "I must learn how to shoe a horse," said the Hon. Frank.

"Well, I never!" thought George. "The first nob in the country, going to shoe a horse," but with his rustic delicacy he said nothing, and led Mr. Winchester to the blacksmith's shop.

Whilst this young gentleman is hammering nails into a horse's hoof, and Australia into an English farmer's mind, we must introduce other personages.

Susanna Merton was beautiful and good: George Fielding and she were acknowledged lovers, but marriage was not spoken of as a near event, and latterly old Merton had seemed cool whenever his daughter mentioned the young man's name.

Susanna appeared to like George, though not so warmly as he loved her; but at all events she accepted no other proffers of love: for all that she had, besides a host of admirers, other lovers besides George; and what is a great deal more singular (for a woman's eye is quick as lightning in finding out who loves her), there was more than one of whose passion she was not conscious.

William Fielding, George's brother, was in love with his brother's sweetheart, but though he trembled with pleasure when she was near him, he never looked at her except by stealth; he knew he had no business to love her.

On the morning of our tale, Susan's father, old Merton, had walked over from his farm to "The Grove," and was inspecting a field behind George's house, when he was accosted by his friend Mr. Meadows, who had seen him, and giving his horse to a boy to hold, had crossed the stubbles to speak to him.

Mr. Meadows was not a common man, and merits some preliminary notice.

He was what is called in the country "a lucky man"; everything he had done in life had prospered.

The neighbours admired, respected, and some of them even hated this respectable man, who had been a carter in the midst of them, and now at forty years of age was a rich corn-factor and land-surveyor.

"All this money cannot have been honestly got," said the envious ones among themselves; yet they could not put their finger on any dishonest action he had done: to the more candid the known qualities of the man accounted for his life of success.

This John Meadows had a cool head, an iron will, a body and mind alike indefatigable, and an eye never diverted from the great objects of sober, industrious men—wealth and respectability: he had also the soul of business—method!

At one hour he was sure to be at church; at another, at market; in his office at a third; and at home when respectable men should be at home.

By this means Mr. Meadows was always to be found by any man who wanted to do business; and when you had found him, you found a man superficially coy perhaps, but at bottom always ready to do business, and equally sure to get the sunny side of it, and give you the windy.

Meadows was generally respected; by none more than by old Merton; and during the last few months the intimacy of these two men had ripened into friendship; the corn factor often hooked his bridle to the old farmer's gate, and took a particular interest in all his affairs.

Such was John Meadows.

In person, he was a tall, stout man, with iron-gray hair, a healthy, weather-coloured complexion, and a massive brow that spoke to the depth and force of the man's character.

"What, taking a look at the farm, Mr. Merton? it wants some of your grass put to it, doesn't it?"

"I never thought much of the farm," was the reply, "it lies cold; the sixty-acre field is well enough, but the land on the hill is as poor as death."

Now this idea, which Merton gave out as his, had dropped into him from Meadows, three weeks before.

"Farmer," said Meadows in an undertone, "they are threshing out new wheat for the rent."

"You don't say so? why, I didn't hear the flail going."

"They have just knocked off for dinner—you need not say I told you, but Will Fielding was at the bank this morning, trying to get money on their bill, and the bank said No! They had my good word *too*. The people of the bank sent over to me."

They had his good word, but not his good tone! He had said, "Well, their father was a safe man," but the accent with which he eulogised the parent had somehow locked the bank cash-box to the children.

"I never liked it, especially of late," mused Merton. "But you see, the young folk being cousins——"

"That is it, cousins," put in Meadows: "it is not as if she loved him with all her heart and soul; she is an obedient daughter, isn't she?"

"Never gainsayed me in her life; she has a high spirit, but never with me—my word is law. You see, she is a very religious girl, is Susan."

"Well, then, a word from you would save her—but there—all that is your affair, not mine," added he.

"Of course it is," was the reply. "You are a true friend: I'll step round to the barn and see what is doing;" and away went Susan's father, uneasy in his mind.

Meadows went to the "Black Horse," the village public-house, to see what farmers wanted to borrow a little money

under the rose, and would pawn their wheat-ricks, and pay twenty per cent. for that overrated merchandise.

At the door of the public-house he was met by the village constable, and a stranger of gentlemanly address and clerical appearance; the constable wore a mysterious look, and invited Meadows into the parlour of the public-house.

"I have news for you, sir," said he, "leastways I think so; your pocket was picked last Martinmas fair of three Farnborough bank-notes, with your name on the back."

"It was!"

"Is this one of them?" said the man, producing a note.

Meadows examined it with interest, compared the number with a memorandum in his pocket-book, and pronounced that it was.

"Who passed it?" inquired he.

"A chap that has got the rest—a stranger—Robinson—that lodges at 'The Grove' with George Fielding; that is, if his name *is* Robinson, but we think he is a Londoner come down to take an airing. You understand, sir."

Meadows' eyes flashed actual fire: for so rich a man, he seemed wonderfully excited by this circumstance.

To an inquiry who was his companion, the constable answered, *sotto voce,* "Gentleman from Bow Street come to see if he knows him." The constable went on to inform Meadows that Robinson was out fishing somewhere, otherwise they would already have taken him: "but we will hang about the farm, and take him when he comes home."

"You had better be at hand, sir, to identify the notes," said the gentleman from Bow Street, whose appearance was clerical.

Meadows had important business five miles off: he postponed it. He wrote a line in pencil, put a boy upon his black mare, and hurried him off to the rendezvous, while he stayed and entered with strange alacrity into this affair. "Stay," cried he, "if he is an old hand, he will twig the officer."

"Oh, I'm dark, sir," was the answer; "he won't know me till I put the darbies on him."

The two men then strolled as far as the village stocks, keeping an eye ever on the farm-house.

Thus a network of adverse events was closing round George Fielding this day.

He was all unconscious of them; he was in good spirits.

Robinson had showed him how to relieve the temporary embarrassment that had lately depressed him.

"Draw a bill on your brother," said Robinson, "and let him accept it. The Farnborough Bank will give you notes for it: these country banks like any paper better than their own. I daresay they are right."

George had done this, and expected William every minute with this and other monies; and then Susanna Merton was to dine at "The Grove" to-day, and this, though not an uncommon, was always a great event with poor George.

Dilly would not come to be killed just when he was wanted: in other words, Robinson, who had no idea how he was keeping people waiting, fished tranquilly till near dinner-time, neither taking nor being taken.

This detained Meadows in the neighbourhood of the farm, and was the cause of his rencontre with a very singular personage, whose visit he knew at sight must be to him.

As he hovered about among George Fielding's ricks, the figure of an old man, slightly bowed but full of vigour, stood before him. He had a long gray beard with a slight division in the centre, hair abundant but almost white, and a dark swarthy complexion that did not belong to England; his thick eyebrows also were darker than his hair, and under them was an eye like a royal jewel: his voice had the Oriental richness and modulation—this old man was Isaac Levi, an Oriental Jew who had passed half his life under the sun's eye, and now, though the town of Farnborough had long been too accustomed to him to wonder at him, he dazzled any thoughtful stranger; so exotic and apart was he—so romantic a grain in a heap of vulgarity—he was as though a striped jasper had crept in among the paving-stones of their market-place, or a cactus grandiflora shone amongst the nettles of a Berkshire meadow.

Isaac Levi, unlike most Jews, was familiar with the Hebrew tongue, and this and the Eastern habits of his youth coloured his language and his thoughts, especially in his moments of emotion, and above all, when he forgot the money-lender for a moment, and felt and thought as one of a great nation depressed, but waiting for a great deliverance. He was a man of authority and learning in his tribe.

At sight of Isaac Levi, Meadows' brow lowered, and he called out rather rudely, without allowing the old gentleman to speak, "If you are come to talk to me about that house

you are in, you may keep your breath to cool your porridge."

Meadows had bought the house Isaac rented, and had instantly given him warning to leave.

Isaac, who had become strangely attached to the only place in which he had ever lived many years, had not doubted for a moment that Meadows merely meant to raise the rent to its full value, so he had come to treat with his new landlord. "Mr. Meadows," said he persuasively, "I have lived there twenty years—I pay a fair rent—but, if you think anyone would give you more, you shall lose nothing by me—I will pay a little more; and you know your rent is secure?"

"I do," was the answer.

"Thank you, sir! well, then——"

"Well, then, next Ladyday you turn out bag and baggage."

"Nay, sir," said Isaac Levi, "hear me, for you are younger than I. Mr. Meadows, when this hair was brown I travelled in the East; I sojourned in Madras and Benares, in Bagdad, Ispahan, Mecca, and Bassora, and found no rest. When my hair began to turn gray, I traded in Petersburg, and Rome, and Paris, Vienna, and Lisbon, and other western cities, and found no rest. I came to this little town, where, least of all, I thought to pitch my tent for life, but here the God of my fathers gave me my wife, and here He took her to Himself again——"

"What the deuce is all this to me, man?"

"Much, sir, if you are what men say; for men speak well of you; be patient, and hear me. Two children were born to me, and died from me in the house you have bought; and there my Leah died also; and there at times in the silent hours I seem to hear their voices and their feet. In another house I shall never hear them—I shall be quite alone. Have pity on me, sir, an aged and a lonely man; tear me not from the shadows of my dead. Let me prevail with you?"

"No!" was the stern answer.

"No?" cried Levi, a sudden light darting into his eye; "then you must be an enemy of Isaac Levi?"

"Yes!" was the grim reply to this rapid inference.

"Ah!" cried the old Jew, with a sudden defiance, which he instantly suppressed. "And what have I done to gain

your enmity, sir?" said he, in a tone crushed by main force into mere regret.

"You lend money."

"A little, sir, now and then—a very little."

"That is to say, when the security is bad, you have no money in hand; but when the security is good, nobody has ever found the bottom of Isaac Levi's purse."

"Our people," said Isaac apologetically, "can trust one another—they are not like yours. We are brothers, and that is why money is always forthcoming when the deposit is sound."

"Well," said Meadows, "what you are, I am; what I do on the sly, you do on the sly, old thirty per cent."

"The world is wide enough for us both, good sir——"

"It is!" was the prompt reply. "And it lies before you, Isaac. Go where you like, for the little town of Farnborough is not wide enough for me and any man that works my business for his own pocket——"

"But this is not enmity, sir."

Meadows gave a coarsish laugh. "You are hard to please," cried he. "I think you will find it is enmity."

"Nay! sir, this is but matter of profit and loss. Well, let me stay, and I promise you shall gain and not lose. Our people are industrious and skilful in all bargains, but we keep faith and covenant. So be it. Let us be friends. I covenant with you, and I swear, by the tables of the law, you shall not lose one shilling per annum by me."

"I'll trust you as far as I can fling a bull by the tail. You gave me your history—take mine. I have always put my foot on whatever man or thing has stood in my way. I was poor, I am rich, and that is my policy."

"It is frail policy," said Isaac firmly. "Some man will be sure to put his foot on you, soon or late."

"What, do you threaten me?" roared Meadows.

"No, sir," said Isaac, gently but steadily. "I but tell you what these old eyes have seen in every nation, and read in books that never lie. Goliath defied armies, yet he fell like a pigeon by a shepherd-boy's sling. Samson tore a lion in pieces with his hands, but a woman laid him low. No man can defy us all, sir! The strong man is sure to find one as strong and more skilful; the cunning man one as adroit and stronger than himself. Be advised, then, do not trample upon one of my people. Nations and men that oppress us do not thrive. Let me have to bless you. An

old man's blessing is gold. See these gray hairs: my sorrows have been as many as they. His share of the curse that is upon his tribe has fallen upon Isaac Levi." Then, stretching out his hands, with a slight but touching gesture, he said, "I have been driven to and fro like a leaf these many years, and now I long for rest. Let me rest in my little tent, till I rest for ever. Oh! let me die, where those I loved have died, and there let me be buried."

Age, sorrow, and eloquence pleaded in vain, for they were wasted on the rocks of rocks—a strong will and a vulgar soul. But indeed the whole thing was like epic poetry wrestling with the *Limerick Chronicle* or *Tuam Gazette*.

I am almost ashamed to give the respectable Western brute's answer.

"What! you quote Scripture, eh? I thought you did not believe in that. Hear t'other side. Abraham and Lot couldn't live in the same place, because they both kept sheep; and we can't, because we fleece 'em. So Abraham gave Lot warning, as I give it you. And as for dying on my premises, if you like to hang yourself before next Lady-day, I give you leave, but after Ladyday no more Jewish dogs shall die in my house nor be buried for manure in my garden."

Black lightning poured from the old Jew's eyes, and his pent-up wrath burst out like lava from an angry mountain.

"Irreverent cur! do you rail on the afflicted of Heaven? The Founder of your creed would abhor you, for He, they say, was pitiful. I spit upon ye, and I curse ye. Be accursed!!" And flinging up his hands, like St. Paul at Lystra, he rose to double his height, and towered at his insulter with a sudden Eastern fury that for a moment shook even the iron Meadows. "Be accursed!!" he yelled again. "Whatever is the secret wish of your black heart, Heaven look on my gray hairs that you have insulted, and wither that wish. Ah! ah!" he screamed, "you wince. All men have secret wishes—Heaven fight against yours. May all the good luck you have be wormwood for want of that—that—that—that. May you be near it, close to it, upon it, pant for it, and lose it; may it sport, and smile, and laugh, and play with you till Gehenna burns your soul upon earth."

The old man's fiery forked tongue darted so keen and true to some sore in his adversary's heart, that he in turn lost his habitual self-command.

White and black with passion, he wheeled round on Isaac

with a fierce snarl, and, lifting his stick, discharged a furious blow at his head.

Fortunately for Isaac, wood encountered leather instead of gray hairs.

Attracted by the raised voices, and unseen in their frenzy by either of these antagonists, young George Fielding had drawn near them. He had, luckily, a stout pig-whip in his hand, and by an adroit turn of his muscular wrist he parried a blow that would have stopped the old Jew's eloquence perhaps for ever. As it was, the corn-factor's stick cut like a razor through the air, and made a most musical whirr within a foot of the Jew's ear: the basilisk look of venom and vengeance he instantly shot back amounted to a stab.

"Not if I know it," said George. And he stood cool and erect, with a calm manly air of defiance, between the two belligerents. While the stick and the whip still remained in contact, Meadows glared at Isaac's champion with surprise and wrath, and a sort of half-fear, half-wonder that this of all men in the world should be the one to cross weapons with and thwart him. "You are joking, Master Meadows," said George coolly. "Why, the man is twice your age, and nothing in his hand but his fist.—Who are ye, old man, and what d'ye want? It's you for cursing, anyway."

"He insults me," cried Meadows, "because I won't have him for a tenant against my will. Who is he? A villainous old Jew."

"Yes, young man," said the other sadly, "I am Isaac Levi, a Jew.—And what is your religion?" (He turned upon Meadows.) "I never came out of Judea in any name or shape. D'ye call yourself a heathen? Ye lie, ye cur; the heathen were not without starlight from Heaven; they respected sorrow and gray hairs."

"You shall smart for this: I'll show you what my religion is," said Meadows, inadvertent with passion, and the corn-factor's fingers grasped his stick convulsively.

"Don't you be so aggravating, old man," said the good-natured George, "and you, Mr. Meadows, should know how to make light of an old man's tongue; why, it's like a woman's, it's all he's got to hit with; leastways you mustn't lift hand to him on my premises, or you will have to settle with me first; and I don't think that would suit your book or any man's for a mile or two round about Farnborough," said George, with his little Berkshire drawl.

"He!" shrieked Isaac, "he dare not! see! see!" and he pointed nearly into the man's eye, "he doesn't look you in the face. Any soul that has read men from east to west can see lion in your eye, young man, and cowardly wolf in his."

"Ladyday! Ladyday!" snorted Meadows, who was now shaking with suppressed rage.

"Ah!" cried Isaac, and he turned white and quivered in his turn.

"Ladyday!" said George uneasily, "*con*found Ladyday, and every day of the sort—there, don't you be so spiteful, old man—why, if he isn't all of a tremble; poor old man." He went to his own door, and called "Sarah!"

A stout servant-girl answered the summons.

"Take the old man in, and give him whatever is going, and his mug and pipe;" then he whispered her, "and don't go lumping the chine down under his nose, now."

"I thank you, young man," faltered Isaac, "I must not eat with you, but I will go in and rest my limbs, which fail me, and compose myself: for passion is unseemly at my years."

Arrived at the door, he suddenly paused, and looking upward, said—

"Peace be under this roof, and comfort and love follow me into this dwelling."

"Thank ye kindly," said young Fielding, a little surprised and touched by this. "How old are you, daddy, if you please?" added he respectfully.

"My son, I am threescore years and ten—a man of years and grief—grief for myself, grief still more for my nation and city. Men that are men pity us; men that are dogs have insulted us in all ages."

"Well," said the good-natured young man soothingly, "don't you vex yourself any more about it. Now you go in, and forget all your trouble awhile, please God, by my fireside, my poor old man."

Isaac turned, the water came to his eyes at this after being insulted so; a little struggle took place in him, but nature conquered prejudice and certain rubbish he called religion. He held out his hand like the king of all Asia; George grasped it like an Englishman.

"Isaac Levi is your friend," and the expression of the man's whole face and body showed these words carried with them a meaning unknown in good society.

He entered the house, and young Fielding stood watching him with a natural curiosity.

Now Isaac Levi knew nothing about the corn-factor's plans. When at one and the same moment he grasped George's hand, and darted a long, lingering glance of demoniacal hatred on Meadows, he coupled two sentiments by pure chance—and Meadows knew this: but still it struck Meadows as singular and ominous.

When, with the best of motives, one is on a wolf's errand, it is not nice to hear a hyena say to the shepherd's dog, "I am your friend," and see him contemporaneously shoot the eye of a rattlesnake at oneself.

The misgiving, however, was but momentary; Meadows respected his own motives, and felt his own power; an old Jew's wild fury could not shake his confidence.

He muttered, "One more down to your account, George Fielding," and left the young man watching Isaac's retreating form.

George, who didn't know he was gone, said—

"Old man's words seem to knock against my bosom, Mr. Meadows. Gone—eh? That man," thought George Fielding, "has everybody's good word, parson's and all—who'd think he'd lift his hand, leastways his stick it was, and that's worse, against a man of threescore and upwards—ugh!" thought George Fielding, yeoman of the Midland counties—and unaffected wonder mingled with his disgust.

His reverie was broken by William Fielding, just ridden in from Farnborough.

"Better late than never," said the elder brother impatiently.

"Couldn't get away sooner, George; here's the money for the sheep, £13, 10s. No offer for the cow; Jem is driving her home."

"Well, but the money—the eighty pounds, Will?"

William looked sulkily down.

"I haven't got it, George!—there's your draft again, the bank wouldn't take it."

A keen pang shot across George's face, as much for the affront as the disappointment.

"They wouldn't take it?" gasped he. "Ay, Will, our credit is down; the whole town knows our rent is overdue. I suppose you know money *must* be got some way."

"Any way is better than threshing out new wheat at such

a price," said William sullenly. "Ask a loan of a neighbour."

"Oh, Will," appealed George, "to ask a loan of a neighbour, and be denied—it is bitterer than death. *You* can do it."

"I!—am I master here?" retorted the younger. "The farm is not farmed my way, nor ever was. No!—give me the plough-handle and I'll cut the furrow, George."

"No doubt! no doubt!" said the other, very sharply, "you'd like to draw the land dry with potato crops, and have fourscore hogs snoring in the farm-yard, that's your idea of a farm. Oh! I know you want to be elder brother. Well, I tell'ee what do: you kill me first, Bill Fielding, and then you will be elder brother, and not afore."

Here was a pretty little burst of temper! We have all our sore part.

"So be it, George!" replied William, "you got us into the mud, elder brother, you get us out of the mire!"

George subdued his tone directly.

"Who shall I ask?" said he, as one addressing a bosom counsellor.

"Uncle Merton, or—or—Mr. Meadows, the corn-factor; he lends money at times to friends. It would not be much to either of them."

"Show my empty pockets to Susanna's father! Oh, Will! how can you be so cruel?"

"Meadows, then."

"No use for me, I've just offended him a bit; besides, he's a man that never knew trouble or ill-luck in his life; they are like flints, all that sort."

"Well, look here, I'm pretty well with Meadows. I'll ask him if you will try uncle; the first that meets his man to begin."

"That sounds fair," said George, "but I can't—well—yes," said he, suddenly changing his mind. "I agree," said he, with simple cunning, and lowered his eyes; but suddenly raising them, he said cheerfully, "Why, you're in luck, Bill, here's your man," and he shot like an arrow into his own kitchen.

"Confound it," said the other, "fairly caught."

Meadows, it is to be observed, was wandering about the premises until such time as Robinson should return; and whilst the brothers were arguing, he had been in the barn, and, finding old Merton there, had worked still higher that

prudent man's determination to break off matters between his daughter and the farmer of "The Grove."

After the usual salutations, William Fielding, sore against the grain, began—

"I did not know you were here, sir! I want to speak to you."

"I am at your service, Mr. Willum."

"Well, sir. George and I are a little short just at present; it is only for a time, and George says, he should take it very kind, if you would lend us a hundred pounds, just to help us over the stile."

"Why, Mr. Willum," replied Meadows, "I should be delighted, and if you had only asked me yesterday, I could have done it as easy as stand here; but my business drinks a deal of money, Mr. Willum, and I laid out all my loose cash yesterday; but, of course, it is of no consequence—another time—good-morning, Mr. Willum."

Away sauntered Meadows, leaving William planted there, as the French say.

George ran out of the kitchen.

"Well?"

"He says he has got no money loose."

"He is a liar! he paid fifteen hundred pounds into the bank yesterday, and you knew it; didn't you tell him so?"

"No; what use? A man that lies to avoid lending won't be driven to lend."

"You don't play fair," retorted George. "You could have got it from Meadows, if you had a mind to; but you want to drive your poor brother against his sweetheart's father; you are false, my lad."

"You are the only man that ever said so; and you durstn't say it, if you weren't my brother."

"If it wasn't for that, I'd say a deal more."

"Well, show your high stomach to Uncle Merton, for there he is. Hy!—uncle!" cried William to Merton, who turned instantly and came towards them. "George wants to speak to you," said William, and shot like a cross-bow behind the house.

"That is lucky," said Merton, "for I want to speak to you."

"Who would have thought of his being about?" muttered George.

While George was calling up his courage and wits to open his subject, Mr. Merton, who had no such difficulties, was beforehand with him.

"You are threshing out new wheat?" said Merton gravely.

"Yes," answered George, looking down.

"That is a bad look-out; a farmer has no business to go to his barn-door for his rent."

"Where is he to go, then? to the church-door, and ask for a miracle?"

"No; to his ship-fold, to be sure."

"Ay! you can; you have got grass and water and everything to hand."

"And so must you, young man, or you'll never be a farmer. Now, George, I must speak to you seriously." (George winced.) "You are a fine lad, and I like you very well, but I love my own daughter better."

"So do I," said George simply.

"And I must look out for her," resumed Merton. "I have seen a pretty while how things are going here, and if she marries you, she will have to keep you instead of you her."

"Heaven forbid! Matters are not so bad as that, uncle."

"You are too much of a man, I hope," continued Merton, "to eat a woman's bread; and if you are not, I am man enough to keep the girl from it."

"These are hard words to bear," gasped George. "So near my own house, old man."

"Well, plain speaking is best, when the mind is made up," was the reply.

"Is this from Susanna, as well as you?" said George, with a trembling lip, and scarce able to utter the words.

"Susan is an obedient daughter. What I say she'll stand to; and I hope you know better than to tempt her to disobey me; you wouldn't succeed."

"Enough said," answered George very sternly. "Enough said, old man; I've no need to tempt any girl."

"Good-morning, George!" and away stumped Merton.

"Good-morning, uncle! (ungrateful old thief)."

"William," cried he, to his brother, who came the next minute to hear the news, "our mother took him out of the dirt—I have heard her say as much—or he'd not have a ship-fold to brag of. Oh! my heart—oh! Will!——"

"Well, will he lend the money?"

"I never asked him."

"You never asked him!" cried William.

"Bill, he began upon me in a moment," said George, looking appealingly into his brother's face; "he sees we are going downhill, and he as good as bade me think no more of Susan."

"Well," said the other harshly, "it was your business to own the truth, and ask him help us over the stile—he's our own blood."

"You want to let me down lower than I would let that Carlo dog of yours. You're no brother of mine," retorted George, fiercely and bitterly.

"A bargain is a bargain," replied the other sullenly. "I asked Meadows, and he said no. You fell talking with uncle about Susan, and never put the question to him at all. Who is the false one, eh?"

"If you call me false, I'll knock your ugly head off, sulky Bill."

"You're false, and a fool into the bargain, bragging George!"

"What, you will have it, then?"

"If you can give it me."

"Well, if it is to be," said George, "I'll give you something to put you on your mettle: the best man shall farm "The Grove," and the other shall be a servant on it, or go elsewhere, for I am sick of this."

"And so am I!" cried William hastily; "and have been any time this two years."

They tucked up their sleeves a little, shook hands, and then they retired each one step, and began to fight.

And how came these two honest men to forget that the blood they proposed to shed was thicker than water? Was it the farm, money, agricultural dissension, temper? They would have told you it was, and perhaps thought it was. It was Susanna Merton!

The secret, subtle influence of jealousy had long been fermenting, and now it exploded in this way and under this disguise.

Ah! William Fielding, and all of you, "Beware of jealousy"—cursed jealousy! it is the sultan of all the passions, and the Tartar chief of all the crimes. Other passions affect the character; this changes, and, if good, always reverses it! Mind that, reverses it! turns honest men to snakes, and doves to vultures. Horrible unnatural mixture of Love with Hate—you poison the whole mental constitution—you bandage the judgment—you crush the

sense of right and wrong—you steel the bowels of compassion—you madden the brain—you corrupt the heart—you damn the soul.

The Fieldings, then, shook hands mechanically, and receding each a step, began to spar.

Each of these farmers fancied himself slightly the best man; but they both knew they had an antagonist with whom it would not do to make the least mistake.

They therefore sparred and feinted with wary eye before they ventured to close; George, however, the more impetuous, was preparing to come to closer quarters, when all of a sudden, to the other's surprise, he dropped his hands by his sides, and turned the other way with a face anything but warlike, fear being now the prominent expression.

William followed the direction of his eye, and then William partook his brother's uneasiness; however, he put his hands in his pockets, and began to saunter about, in a circumference of three yards, and to get up a would-be-careless whistle, while George's hands became dreadfully in his way, so he washed them in the air.

Whilst they were employed in this peaceful pantomime, a beautiful young woman glided rapidly between the brothers.

Her first words renewed their uneasiness.

"What is this?" cried she haughtily, and she looked from one to the other like a queen rebuking her subjects.

George looked at William—William had nothing ready.

So George said, with some hesitation, but in a mellifluous voice, "William was showing me—a trick—he learned at the fair—that is all, Susan."

"That is a falsehood, George," replied the lady, "the first you ever told me"—(George coloured)—"you were fighting, you two boys—I saw your eyes flash!"

The rueful wink exchanged by the combatants at this stroke of sagacity was truly delicious.

"Oh fie! oh fie! brothers by one mother fighting—in a Christian land—within a stone's throw of a church, where brotherly love is preached as a debt we owe to strangers, let alone our own blood."

"Yes! it is a sin, Susan," said William, his conscience suddenly illuminated. "So I ask *your* pardon, Susanna."

"Oh! it wasn't your fault, I'll be bound," was the gracious reply. "What a ruffian you must be, George, to shed your brother's blood."

"La! Susan," said George, with a doleful whine, "I

wasn't going to shed the beggar's blood. I was only going to give him a hiding for his impudence."

"Or take one for your own," replied William coolly.

"That is more likely," said Susan. "George, take William's hand; take it this instant, I say," cried she with an air imperative and impatient.

"Well, why not? don't you go in a passion, Susan, about nothing," said George coaxingly.

They took hands; she made them hold one another by the hand, which they did with both their heads hanging down. "Whilst I speak a word to you two," said Susan Merton.

"You ought both to go on your knees, and thank Providence that sent me here to prevent so great a crime; and as for you, your character must change greatly, George Fielding, before I trust myself to live in a house of yours."

"Is all the blame to fall on my head?" said George, letting go William's hand, with no great apparent reluctance.

"Of course it is! William is a quiet lad, that quarrels with nobody; you are always quarrelling; you thrashed our carter last Candlemas."

"He spoke saucy words about you."

Susan, smiling inwardly, made her face as repulsive outside as lay in her power.

"I don't believe it," said Susan; "your time was come round to fight and be a ruffian, and so it was to-day, no doubt."

"Ah!" said George sorrowfully, "it is always poor George that does all the wrong."

"Oh!" replied the lady, an arch smile playing for a moment about her lips, "I could scold William, too, if you think I am as much interested in his conduct and behaviour as in yours."

"No, no!" cried George, brightening up, "don't think to scold anybody but me, Susan; and William," said he, suddenly and frankly, "I ask your pardon."

"No more about it, George, if you please," answered William, in his dogged way.

"Susan," said George, "you don't know all I have to bear. My heart is sore, Susan dear. Uncle twitted me not an hour ago with my ill-luck, and almost bade me to speak to you no more, leastways as my sweetheart; and that was why, when William came at me, on the top of such a blow, it was more than I could bear; and Susan—Susan—uncle said you would stand to whatever he said."

"George," said Susan gently, "I am very sorry my father was so unkind."

"Thank ye kindly, Susan; that is the first drop of dew that has fallen on me to-day."

"But obedience to parents," continued Susan, interrogating as it were her conscience, "is a great duty. I *hope* I shall never disobey my father," faltered she.

"Oh!" answered the goose George hastily, "I don't want any girl to be kind to me that does not love me; I am so unlucky, it would not be worth her while, you know."

At this Susan answered still more sharply, "No, I don't think it would be worth any woman's while, till your character and temper undergo a change."

George never answered a word, but went and leaned his head upon the side of the cart that stood half in and half out of a shed close by.

At this juncture a gay personage joined the party. He had a ball waistcoat, an alarming tie, a shooting jacket, wet muddy trousers and shoes, and an empty basket on his back.

He joined our group, just as George was saying to himself, very sadly, "I am in everybody's way here"—and he attacked him directly.

"Everybody is in this country."

The reader is to understand that this Robinson was last from California; and California had made such an impression upon him, that he turned the conversation that way oftener than a well-regulated understanding recurs to any one topic, except perhaps religion.

He was always pestering George to go to California with him, and it must be owned that on this one occasion George had given him a fair handle.

"Come out of it," continued Robinson, "and make your fortune."

"You did not make yours there," said Susan sharply.

"I beg your pardon, miss. I made it, or how could I have spent it?"

"No doubt," said William, "what comes by the wind goes by the water."

"Alluding to the dust?" inquired the Cockney.

"Gold dust especially," retorted Susan Merton.

Robinson laughed. "The ladies are sharp, even in Berkshire," said he.

Mr. Robinson then proceeded to disabuse their minds about the facility of gold.

"A crop of gold," said he, "does not come by the wind any more than a crop of corn; it comes by harder digging than your potatoes ever saw, and harder work than you ever did—oxen and horses perspire for you, Fielding No. 2."

"Did you ever see a horse or an ox mow an acre of grass or barley?" retorted William drily.

"Don't brag," replied the other; "they'll eat all you can mow and never say a word about it."

This repartee was so suited to the rustic idea of wit, that Robinson's antagonists laughed heartily, except George.

"What is the matter with him?" said Robinson, *sotto voce,* indicating George.

"Oh! he is cross, never mind him," replied Susan ostentatiously loud. George winced, but never spoke back to her.

Robinson then proceeded to disabuse the rural mind of the notion that gold is to be got without hard toil even in California; he told them how the miners' shirts were wet through and through in the struggle for gold; he told them how the little boys demanded a dollar a-piece for washing these same garments; and how the miners, to escape this extortion, sent their linen to China in ships on Monday morning, and China sent them back on Saturday, only it was Saturday three weeks.

Next Mr. Robinson proceeded to draw a parallel between England and various nations on the other side of the Atlantic, not at all complimentary to his island home; above all, he was eloquent on the superior dignity of labour in new countries.

"I heard one of your clodhoppers say the other day, 'The squire is a good gentleman, he often *gives me a day's work.*' Now, I should think it was the clodhopper gave the gentleman the day's work, and the gentleman gave him a shilling for it—and made five by it."

William Fielding scratched his head: this was a new view of things to him, but there seemed to be something in it.

"Ay! rake that into your upper soil," cried our republican orator; then collecting into one his scattered items of argument, he invited his friend George to take his muscle,

pluck, wind, backbone and self out of this miserable country, and come where the best man has a chance to win.

"Come, George," he cried, "England is the spot if you happen to be married to a duke's daughter, and got fifty thousand a year and three houses.

"*And* a coach.

"*And* a brougham.

"*And* a curricle.

"*And* ten brace of pointers.

"*And* a telescope so big the stars must move to it, instead of it to the stars.

"*And* no end of pretty housemaids.

"*And* a butler with a poultice round his neck and whiskers like a mop-head.

"*And* a silver tub full of rose-water to sit in and read the *Morning Post.*

"*And* a greenhouse full of peaches—and green peas all the year round.

"*And* a pew in the church warmed with biling eau-de-Cologne.

"*And* a carpet a foot thick.

"*And* a pianoforte in every blessed room in the house. But this island is the Dead Sea to a poor man."

He then, diverging from the rhetorical to the metropolitan style, proposed to his friend "to open one eye, that will show you this hole you are in is all poor hungry arable ground. You know you can't work it to a profit." (George winced.) "No! steal, borrow, or beg five hundred pounds. Carry out a cargo of pea-jackets and fourpenny bits to swap for gold-dust, a few tools, a stout heart, and a light pair of—'Oh no, we never mention them, their name is never heard'—and we'll soon fill both pockets with the shiny in California."

All this, Mr. Robinson delivered with a volubility to which Berkshire had hitherto been a stranger.

"A crust of bread in England before buffalo beef in California," was George's reply; but it was not given in that assured tone with which he would have laughed at Robinson's eloquence a week ago.

"I could not live with all those thieves and ruffians that are settled down there like crows on a dead horse; but I thank you kindly, my lad, all the same," said the tender-hearted young man.

"Strange," thought he, "that so many should sing me the same tune," and he fell back into his reverie.

Here they were all summoned to dinner with a dash of asperity by Sarah, the stout farm-servant.

Susan lingered an instant to speak to George: she chose an unfortunate topic. She warned him once more against Mr. Robinson.

"My father says that he has no business nor trade, and he is not a gentleman, in spite of his red and green cravat, so he must be a rogue of some sort."

"Shall I tell you his greatest fault?" was the bitter reply. "He is my friend; he is the only creature that has spoken kind words to me to-day. Oh! I saw how cross you looked at him."

Susan's eyes flashed, and the colour rose in her cheek, and the water in her eyes.

"You are a fool, George," said she; "you don't know how to read a woman, nor her looks, nor her words either."

And Susan was very angry and disdainful, and did not speak to George all dinner-time.

As for poor George, he followed her into the house with a heart both sick and heavy.

This Berkshire farmer had a proud and sensitive nature under a homely crust.

Old Merton's words had been iron passing through his soul, and besides, he felt as if everything was turning cold and slippery, and gliding from his hand. He shivered with vague fears, and wished the sun would set at one o'clock and the sorrowful day come to an end.

CHAPTER II.

The meal passed almost in silence; Robinson was too hungry to say a word, and a weight hung upon George and Susan.

As they were about to rise, William observed two men in the farm-yard who were strangers to him—the men seemed to be inspecting the hogs. It struck him as rather cool; but apparently the pig is an animal which, to be prized, needs but to be known, for all connoisseurs of him are also enthusiastic amateurs.

When I say the pig, I mean the four-legged one.

William Fielding, partly from curiosity to hear these strangers' remarks, partly hoping to find customers in them, strolled into the farm-yard before his companions rose from the table.

The others, looking carelessly out of the window, saw William join the two men and enter into conversation with them; but their attention was almost immediately diverted from that group by the entrance of Meadows. He came in radiant; his face was a remarkable contrast to the rest of the party.

Susan could not help noticing it.

"Why, Mr. Meadows," cried she, "you look as bright as a May morning; it is quite refreshing to see you; we are all rather down here this morning."

Meadows said nothing, and did not seem at his ease under this remark.

George rose from the table; so did Susan; Robinson merely pushed back his chair, and gave a comfortable little sigh, but the next moment he cried "Hollo!"

They looked up, and there was William's face close against the window.

William's face was remarkably pale, and first he tried to attract George's attention, without speaking, but finding himself observed by the whole party, he spoke out.

"George, will you speak a word?" said he.

George rose and went out; but Susan's curiosity was wakened, and she followed him, accompanied by Meadows.

"None but you, George," said William, with a voice half-stern, half-quivering.

George looked at his brother.

"Out with it," cried he, "it is some deadly ill-luck; I have felt it coming all day, but out with it; what can't I bear after the words I have borne this morning?"

William hung his head.

"George, there is a distress upon the farm for the rent."

George did not speak at first, he literally staggered under these words; his proud spirit writhed in his countenance, and, with a groan, he turned his back abruptly upon them all, and hid his face against the corner of his own house—the cold, hard bricks.

Meadows, by strong self-command, contrived not to move a muscle of his face.

Up to this day and hour, Susan Merton had always seemed cool, compared with her lover; she used to treat

him a little *de haut en bas;* but when she saw his shame and despair, she was much distressed.

"George, George!" she cried, "don't do so: can nothing be done? Where is my father?—they told me he was here: he is rich, he shall help you." She darted from them in search of Merton; ere she could turn the angle of the house he met her.

"You had better go home, my girl," said he gravely.

"Oh! no! no! I have been too unkind to George already," and she turned towards him like a pitying angel, with hands extended as if they would bring balm to a hurt soul.

Meadows left chuckling, and was red and white by turns.

Merton was one of those friends one may make sure of finding in adversity.

"There," cried he, "George, I told you how it would end."

George wheeled round on him like lightning.

"What, do you come here to insult over me? I must be a long way lower than I am, before I shall be as low as you were when my mother took you up and made a man of you."

"George, George!" cried Susan in dismay; "stop, for pity's sake, before you say words that will separate us for ever. Father," cried the peace-making angel, "how can you push poor George so hard and him in trouble! and we have all been too unkind to him to-day."

Ere either could answer, there was happily another interruption. A smart servant in livery walked up to them with a letter. With the instinctive feeling of class, they all endeavoured to conceal their agitation from the gentleman's servant. He handed George the note, and saying, "I was to wait for an answer, Farmer Fielding," sauntered towards the farm-stables.

"From Mr. Winchester," said George, after a long and careful inspection of the outside.

In the country it is a point of honour to find out the writer of a letter by the direction, not the signature.

"The Hon. Francis Winchester! What! does he write to you?" cried Merton, in a tone of great surprise. This, too, was not lost on George.

Human nature is human nature: he was not sorry to be able to read a gentleman's letter in the face of one who had bitterly reproached him, and of others who had seen him mortified and struck down.

"Seems so," said George drily, and with a glance of defiance; and he read out the letter:—

"George Fielding, my fine fellow, think of it again: I have two berths in the ship that sails from Southampton to-morrow; you will have every comfort on the voyage—a great point. I will do what I said for you."—("He promised me five hundred sheep, and a run, after the first year.") "I must have an honest man, and where can I find as honest a man as George Fielding?"—("Thank you, Mr. Winchester; George Fielding thanks you, sir.") And there was something noble and simple in the way the young farmer drew himself up and looked fearlessly in all his companions' eyes.

"You saved my life—I can do nothing for you here—and you are doing no good at 'The Grove'—everybody says so."—("Everybody says so!"—and George Fielding winced at the words.)

"And it really pains me, my brave fellow, to go without you, where I know I could put you on the way of fortune: my heart is pretty stout; but home is home; and be assured that I wait with some anxiety, to know whether my eyes are to look on nothing but water for the next four months, or are to be cheered by the sight of something from home, the face of a thorough-bred English yeoman, and—a friend—and—and——"

Poor George could read no more, the kind words, coming after his affronts and troubles, brought his heart to his mouth.

Susan took the letter from him, and read out—

"And an upright, downright honest man."—"AND SO YOU ARE, GEORGE!" cried she warmly, drawing to George's side, and darting glances of defiance vaguely around. Then she continued to read—

"If the answer is favourable, a word is enough: meet me at 'The Crown,' in Newborough to-night, and we will go up to town by the mail train."

"The answer is, Yes," said George to the servant, who was at some distance.

Susan, bending over the letter, heard, but could not realise the word, but the servant now came nearer: George said to him, "Tell your master, Yes."

"Yes? George!" cried Susan, "what do you mean by yes? It is about going to Australia."

"The answer is yes," said George.

The servant went away with the answer.

The others remained motionless.

"This nobleman's son respects me, if worse folk don't: but it is not the great bloodhounds and greyhounds that bark at misfortune's heels, it is only the village curs, when all is done: this is my path. I'll pack up my things and go." And he did not look at Susan, or any of them, but went into the house like a man walking in his sleep.

There was a stupefied pause.

Then Susan gave a cry like a wounded deer.

"Father! what have you done?"

Merton himself had been staggered, but he replied stoutly—

"No more than my duty, girl, and I hope you will do no less than yours."

At this moment, Robinson threw up the window and jumped out into the yard.

Meadows, under stronger interests, had forgotten Robinson; but now at sight of him he looked round, and catching the eye of a man who was peering over the farm-yard wall, made him a signal.

"What is the matter?" cried Robinson.

"George is going to Australia," replied Merton coldly.

"Australia!" roared Robinson—"Australia! he's mad; who ever goes there unless they are forced?—He shan't go there!—I wouldn't go there if my passage was paid, and a new suit of clothes given me, and the governor's gig to take me ashore to a mansion provided for my reception, fires lighted, beds aired, and pipes laid across upon the table."

As Robinson concluded this tirade the policeman and constable, who had crept round the angle of the farm-house, came one on each side, put each a hand on one of his elbows and—took him!

He looked first down at their hands in turn, then up at their faces in turn, and when he saw the metropolitan's face, a look of simple disgust diffused itself over his whole countenance.

"Ugh!!!" interjected Robinson.

"Ay!" replied the policeman, while putting handcuffs on him, "to Australia you'll go for all that, Tom Lyon, *alias* Scott, *alias* Robinson, and you'll have a new suit of clothes mostly one colour, and voyage paid, and a large house ashore waiting for you; and the governor's gig will come alongside for you, provided they can't find the convicts'

barge," and the official was pleased with himself and his wit, and allowed it to appear.

But by this time, Robinson was on his balance again.

"Gentlemen!" answered he with cold dignity, "what am I to understand by this violence from persons to whom I am an utter stranger?" and he might have sat for the picture of injured innocence. "I am not acquainted with you, sir," added he; "and by the titles you give me it seems you are not acquainted with me."

The police laughed, and took out of this injured man's pocket the stolen notes, which Meadows instantly identified.

Then Mr. Robinson started off into another key, equally artistical in its way.

"Miss Merton," snuffled he, "appearances are against me; but mark my words, my innocence will emerge all the brighter for this temporary cloud."

Susan Merton ran indoors, saying, "Oh! I must tell George." She was not sorry of an excuse to be by George's side, and remind him by her presence that if home had its thorns, it had its rose-tree too.

News soon spreads; rustic heads were seen peeping over the wall to see the finale of the fine gentleman from "Lunnun"; meantime the constable went to put his horse in a four-wheel chaise destined to convey Robinson to the county jail.

If the rural population expected to see this worthy discomposed by so sudden a change of fortune, they were soon undeceived.

"Well, Jacobs," said he, with sudden familiarity, "you seem uncommon pleased, and I am content. I would rather have gone to California, but any place is better than England. Laugh those who win. I shall breathe a delicious climate; you will make yourself as happy as a prince, that is to say, miserable, upon fifteen shillings and two colds a week; my sobriety and industry will realise a fortune under a smiling sun: let chaps that never saw the world, and the beautiful countries there are in it, snivel at leaving this island of fogs and rocks and taxes and nobs, the rich man's paradise, the poor man's—I never swear, it's vulgar."

While he was crushing his captors with his eloquence, George and Susan came together from the house; George's face betrayed wonder, and something akin to horror.

"A thief!" cried he. "Have I taken the hand of a thief?'

"It is a business like any other," said Robinson deprecatingly.

"If you have no shame, I have; I long to be gone now."

"George!" whined the culprit, who, strange to say, had become attached to the honest young farmer; "did ever I take tithe of you? You have got a silver caudle-cup, a heavenly old coffee-pot, no end of spoons double the weight those rogues the silversmiths make them now; they are in a box under your bed in your room," added he, looking down, "count them, they are all right; and Miss Merton, your bracelet, the gold one with the cameo: I could have had it a hundred times. Miss Merton, ask him to shake hands with me at parting. I am so fond of him, and perhaps I shall never see him again."

"Shake hands with you?" answered George sternly; "if your hands were loose I doubt I should ram my fist down your throat; but there, you are not worth a thought at such a time, and you are a man in trouble, and I am another. I forgive you, and I pray Heaven I may never see your face again."

And Honesty turned his back in Theft's face.

Robinson bit his lip and said nothing, but his eyes glistened; just then a little boy and girl, who had been peering about mighty curious, took courage and approached hand-in-hand. The girl was the speaker, as a matter of course.

"Farmer Fielding," said she, curtseying, a mode of reverence which was instantly copied by the boy, "we are come to see the thief; they say you have caught one.—Oh dear!" (and her bright little countenance was overcast), "I couldn't have told it from a man!"

We don't know all that is in the hearts of the wicked. Robinson was observed to change colour at these silly words.

"Mr. Jacobs," said he, addressing the policeman, "have you authority to put me in the pillory before trial?" He said this coldly and sternly; and then added, "Perhaps you are aware that I am a man, and I might say a brother, for you were a thief, you know!" Then changing his tone entirely, "I say, Jacobs," said he, with cheerful briskness, "do you remember cracking the silversmith's shop in Lambeth along with Jem Salisbury and Black George, and ——?"

"There, the gig is ready," cried Mr. Jacobs. "You come along," and the ex-thief pushed the thief hastily off the premises and drove him away with speed.

George Fielding gave a bitter sigh: this was a fresh mortification. He had for the last two months been defending Robinson against the surmises of the village.

Villages are always concluding there is something wrong about people.

"What does he do?" inquired our village.

"Where does he get his blue coat with brass buttons, his tartan waistcoat, and green satin tie with red ends? We admit all this looks like a gentleman: but yet, somehow, a gentleman is a horse of another colour than this Robinson."

George had sometimes laughed at all this, sometimes been very angry, and always stood up stoutly for his friend and lodger.

And now the fools were right and he was wrong: his friend and protégé was handcuffed before his eyes, and carried off to the county jail amidst the grins and stares of a score of gaping rustics, who would make a fine story of it this evening in both the public-houses; and a hundred voices would echo some such conversational tristich as this:—

1st Rustic. "I tawld un as much, dinn't I now, Jarge?"

2nd Rustic. "That ye did, Richard, for I heerd ee."

1st Rustic. "But, la! bless ye, he don't vally advice, *he* don't."

George Fielding groaned out, "I'm ready to go now—I'm quite ready to go—I am leaving a nest of insults;" and he darted into the house, as much to escape the people's eyes as to finish his slight preparations for so great a journey.

Two men were left alone; sulky William and respectable Meadows. Both these men's eyes followed George into the house, and each had a strong emotion they were bent on concealing, and did conceal from each other; but was it concealed from all the world?

The farm-house had two rooms looking upon the spot where most of our tale has passed.

The smaller one of these was a little state parlour, seldom used by the family. Here on a table was a grand old folio Bible; the names, births, and deaths of a century of Fieldings appeared in rusty ink and various handwritings upon its fly-leaf.

Framed on the walls were the first savage attempts of woman at worsted-work in these islands. There were two

moral commonplaces, and there was the forbidden fruit-tree, whose branches diverged at set distances like the radii of a circle, from its stem, a perpendicular line; exactly at the end of each branch hung one forbidden fruit—pre-Raphaelite worsted-work.

There were also two prints of more modern date, one agricultural, one manufactural.

No. 1 was a great show of farming implements at Doncaster.

No. 2 showed how one day in the history of man and of mutton a sheep was sheared, her wool washed, teased, carded, etc., and the cloth *'d and *'d and *'d and *'d, and a coat shaped and sewed and buttoned upon a goose, whose preparations for inebriating the performers and spectators of his feat appeared in a prominent part of the picture.

The window of this sunny little room was open, and on the sill was a row of flower-pots, from which a sweet, fresh smell crept with the passing air into the chamber.

Behind these flower-pots for two hours past had crouched —all eye, and ear, and mind—a keen old man.

To Isaac Levi age had brought vast experience, and had not yet dimmed any one of his senses. More than forty-five years ago he had been brought to see that men seldom act or speak so as to influence the fortunes of others without some motive of their own; and that these motives are seldom the motives they advance; and that their real motives are not always known to themselves, and yet can nearly always be read and weighed by an intelligent bystander.

So, for near half a century, Isaac Levi had read that marvellous page of nature written on black, white, and red parchments, and called "Man."

One result of his perusal was this, that the heads of human tribes differ far more than their hearts.

The passions and the heart he had found intelligible, and much the same from Indus to the Pole.

The people of our tale were like men walking together in a coppice; they had but glimpses of each other's minds: but to Isaac behind his flower-pots they were a little human chart spread out flat before him, and not a region in it he had not travelled and surveyed before to-day: what to others passed for accident to him was design; he penetrated more than one disguise of manner; and above all his intelligence bored like a centre-bit into the deep heart of his enemy Meadows, and at each turn of the centre-bit his eye flashed,

his ear lived, and he crouched patient as a cat, keen as a lynx.

He was forgotten, but not by all.

Meadows, a cautious man, was the one to ask himself. "Where is that old heathen, and what is he doing?"

To satisfy himself, Meadows had come smoothly to the door of the little apartment, and burst suddenly into it.

There he found the reverend Israelite extended on a little couch, a bandana handkerchief thrown over his face, calmly reposing.

Meadows paused, eyed him keenly, listened to his gentle but audible equable breathing, relieved his mind by shaking his fist at him, and went out.

Thirty seconds later, Isaac *awoke!* spat in the direction of Meadows, and crouched again behind the innocent flowers, patient as a cat, keen as a lynx.

So then, when George was gone in, William Fielding and Mr. Meadows both felt a sudden need of being alone; each longed to indulge some feeling he did not care the other should see; so they both turned their faces away from each other and strolled apart.

Isaac Levi caught both faces off their guard, and read the men as by a lightning flash to the bottom line of their hearts.

For two hours he had followed the text, word by word, deed by deed, letter by letter, and now a comment on that text was written in these faces.

That comment said that William was rejoiced at George's departure, and ashamed of himself for the feeling.

That Meadows rejoiced still more, and was ashamed anybody should know he had the feeling.

Isaac withdrew from his lair, his task was done.

"Those men both love that woman, and this Meadows loves her with all his soul, and she—aha!" and triumph flashed from under his dark brows. But at his age, calm is the natural state of the mind and spirits; he composed himself for the present, and awaited an opportunity to strike his enemy with effect.

The aged man had read Mr. Meadows aright; under that modulated exterior raged as deep a passion as ever shook a strong nature.

For some time he had fought against it.

"She is another man's sweetheart," he had said to himself; "no good will come of courting her." But by

degrees the flax bonds of prudence snapped one by one, as the flame every now and then darted at them. Meadows began to reason the matter coolly.

"They can never marry, those two. I wish they would marry or break off, to put me out of this torture; but they can't marry; and my sweet Susan is wasting her prime for nothing, for a dream: besides, it is not as if she loved him the way I love her. She is like many a young maid, the first-comer gets her promise before she knows her value. They walk together, get spoken of; she settles down into a groove, and so goes on, whether her heart is in it, or not; it is habit more than anything."

Then he watched the pair, and observed that Susan's manner to George was cool and off-hand, and that she did not seem to seek opportunities of being alone with him.

Having got so far, he now felt it his duty to think of her interest.

He could not but feel that he was a great match for any farmer's daughter; whereas "poor young Fielding," said he compassionately, "is more likely to break as a bachelor than to support a wife and children upon 'The Grove.'"

He next allowed his mind to dwell with some bitterness upon the poor destiny that stood between him and the woman he loved.

"George Fielding! a dull dog, that could be just as happy with any other girl as with my angel. An oaf, so little alive to his prize, that he doesn't even see he has rivals; doesn't see that his brother loves her. Ah! but I see that though—lovers' eyes are sharp; doesn't see me, who mean to take her from both these Fieldings—and what harm? It isn't as if their love was like mine. Heaven forbid I should meddle if it was. A few weeks, and a few mugs of ale would wash her from what little mind either of them have; but I never loved a woman before, and never could look at another after her."

And so, by degrees, Meadows saw that he was quite justified in his resolve to win Susan Merton, PROVIDED IT WAS DONE FAIRLY.

This resolve taken, all this man's words and actions began to be coloured more or less by his secret wishes; and it is not too much to say that this was the hand, which was gently but adroitly, with a touch here and a touch there, pushing George Fielding across the ocean.

You see, a respectable man can do a deal of mischief ; more than a rogue could.

A shrug of the shoulders from Meadows had caused the landlord to distrain.

A hint from Meadows had caused Merton to affront George about Susan.

A tone of Meadows had closed the bank cash-box to the Fieldings' bill of exchange, and so on : and now, finding it almost impossible to contain his exultation, for George once in Australia he felt he could soon vanquish Susan's faint preference, the result of habit, he turned off, and went to meet his mare at the gate ; the boy had just returned with her.

He put his foot in the stirrup, but ere he mounted, it occurred to him to ask one of the farm-servants whether the old Jew was gone.

"I sin him in the barn just now," was the reply.

Meadows took his foot out of the stirrup.

Never leave an enemy behind you, was one of his rules. "And why does the old heathen stay?" he asked himself ; he clenched his teeth, and vowed he would not leave the village till George Fielding was on his way to Australia.

He sent his mare to the "Black Horse," and strolled up the village ; then he showed the boy a shilling, and said, "You be sure and run to the public-house and let me know when George Fielding is going to start—I should like to see the last of him."

This was true!

CHAPTER III.

And now passed over "The Grove" the heaviest hours it had ever known : hours as weary as they were bitter to George Fielding. "The Grove" was nothing to him now—in mind he was already separated from it ; his clothes were ready, he had nothing more to do, and he wished he could fling himself this moment into the ship, and hide his head, and sleep, and forget his grief, until he reached the land whose fat and endless pastures were to make him rich and send him home a fitter match for Susan.

As the moment of parting drew nearer, there came to him that tardy consolation which often comes to the honest man then, when it can but add to the pangs of regret.

Perhaps no man is good, manly, tender, generous, honest, and unlucky quite in vain: at last, when such a man is leaving all who have been unjust or cold to him, scales fall from their eyes, a sense of his value flashes like lightning across their half-empty skulls and tepid hearts, they feel and express some respect and regret, and make him sadder to leave them; so did the neighbours of "The Grove" to young Fielding. Some hands gave him now their first warm pressure, and one or two voices even faltered as they said, "God bless thee, lad!"

And now the carter's lad ran in with a message from a farmer at the top of the hill.

"Oh! Master George, Farmer Dodd says if you please he couldn't think to let you walk. You are to go in his gig to Newbury, if you'll walk up as fur as his farm; he's afeard to come down *our* hill, a says, because if *he* did, *his* mare 'ud kick *his* gig into toothpicks, *he* says. Oh! Master George, *I* be sorry *you* be going," and the boy, who had begun quite cheerfully, ended in a whimper.

"I thank him! Take my bag, boy, and I will follow in half an hour."

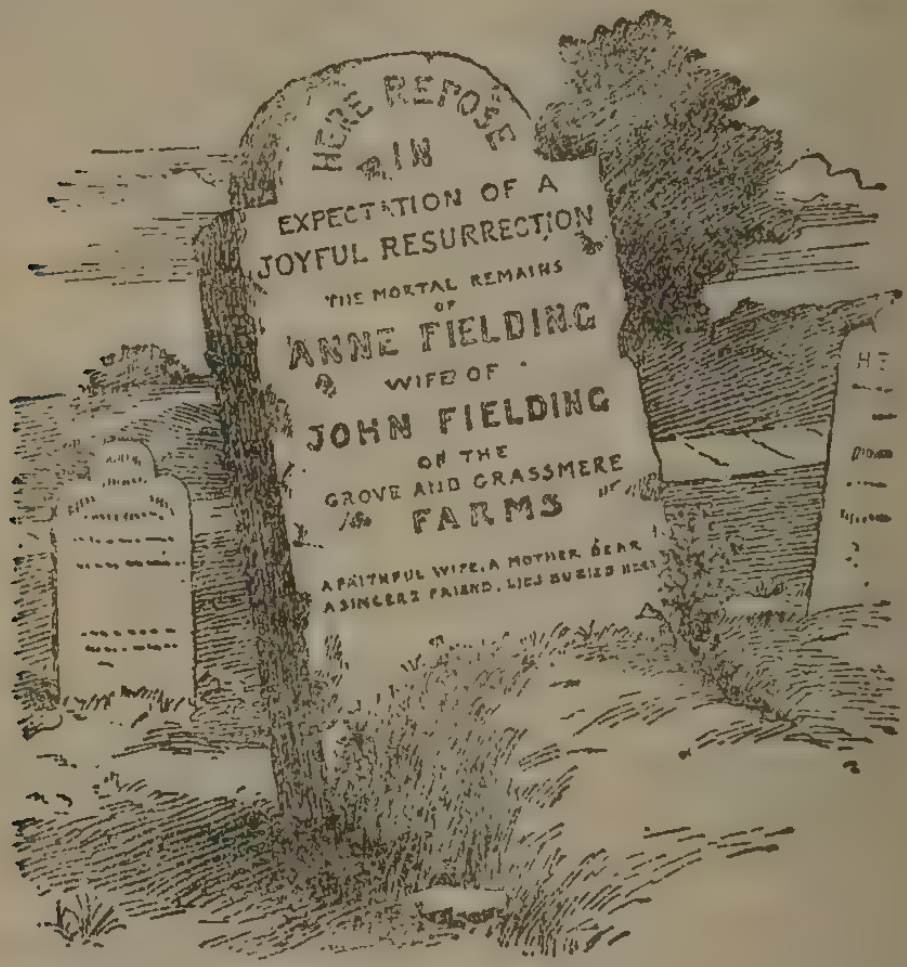
Sarah brought out the bag and opened it, and, weeping bitterly, put into it a bottle with her name on a bit of paper tied round the neck, to remind poor George he was not forgotten at "The Grove," and then she gave George the key, and went sadly in, her apron to her eyes.

And now George fixed his eye on his brother William, and said to him, "William, will you come with me, if *you* please?"

"Ay, George, sure."

They went through the farm-yard side by side; neither spoke, and George took a last look at the ricks, and he paused, and seemed minded to speak, but he did not, he only muttered "Not here." Then George led the way out into the paddock, and so into the lane, and very soon they saw the village church; William wondered George did not speak. They passed under the yew-tree into the church-yard; William's heart fluttered. They found the vicar's cow browsing on the graves; William took up a stone—George put out his hand not to let him hurt her, and George turned her gently into the lane—then he stepped carefully among the graves. William followed him, his heart fluttering more and more with vague fears; William knew

now where they were going, but what was George going to say to him there? his heart beat faint-like. By and by the brothers came to this :—



George looked down at the grave, so did William, neither spoke awhile.

The grave was between the two men—and silence—both looked down.

George whispered, "Good-bye, mother! She never thought we should be parted this way." Then he turned to William, and opened his mouth to say something more to him; doubtless that which he had come to say, but apparently it was too much for him. I think he feared his own resolution. He gasped, and with a heavy sigh led the way home. William walked with him, not knowing what to think or do or say; at last he muttered, "I wouldn't go, if my heart was here!"

"I shall go, Will," replied George rather sternly, as it seemed.

When they came back to the house, they found several persons collected.

Old Fielding, the young men's grandfather, was there; he had made them wheel him in his great chair out into the sun.

Grandfather Fielding had reached the last stage of human existence. He was ninety-two years of age. The lines in his face were cordage, his aspect was stony and impassible, and he was all but impervious to passing events; his thin blood had almost ceased to circulate in his extremities; for every drop he had was needed to keep his old heart a-beating at all, instead of stopping like a clock that has run down.

Meadows had returned to see George off, and old Merton was also there, and he was one of those whose hearts gave them a bit of a twinge.

"George," said he, "I'm vexed for speaking unkind to you to-day of all days in the year; I didn't think we were to part so soon, lad."

"No more about it, uncle," faltered George; "what does it matter now?"

Susan Merton came out of the house; she had caught her father's conciliatory words; she seemed composed, but pale; she threw her arms round her father's neck.

"Oh! father," said she imploringly, "I thought it was a dream, but he is going, he is really going. Oh! don't let him go from us, speak him fair, father, his spirit is so high."

"Susan!" replied the old farmer, "mayhap the lad thinks me his enemy, but I'm not. My daughter shall not marry a bankrupt farmer.—But you bring home a thousand pounds—just one thousand pounds—to show me you are not a fool, and you shall have my daughter, and she shall have my blessing."

Meadows exulted.

"Your hand on that, uncle," cried George with ardour; "your hand on that before Heaven and all present."

The old farmer gave George his hand upon it.

"But, father," cried Susan, "your words are sending him away from me."

"Susan!" said George sorrowfully but firmly, "I am to go; but don't forget it is for your sake I leave you, my darling Susan—to be a better man for your sake. Uncle, since your last words there is no ill-will, but" (bluntly) "I can't speak my heart before you."

"I'll go, George, I'll go; shan't be said my sister's son hadn't leave to speak his mind, toletbewhoatool,* at such an a time."

Merton turned to leave them, but ere he had taken two steps a most unlooked-for interruption chained him to the spot. An old man, with a long beard and a glittering eye, was amongst them before they were aware of him; he fixed his eye upon Meadows, and spoke a single word—but that word fell like a sledge-hammer.

"No!!" said Isaac Levi in the midst.

"No!!" repeated he to John Meadows.

Meadows understood perfectly what "No" meant; a veto upon all his plans, hopes, and wishes.

"Young man," said Isaac to George, "you shall not wander forth from the home of your fathers. These old eyes see deeper than yours" (and he sent an eye-stab at Meadows); "you are honest—all men say so—I will lend you the money for your rent, and one who loves you (and he gave another eye-stab at Meadows) will bless me."

"Oh! yes, I bless you," cried Susan innocently.

The late exulting Meadows was benumbed at this.

"Surely Heaven sends you to me," cried Susan. "It is Mr. Levi of Farnborough."

Here was a diversion: Meadows cursed the intruder, and his own evil star that had raised him up so malignant an enemy.

"All my web undone in a moment," thought he, and despair began to take possession of him.

Susan, on the other hand, was all joy and hope; William more or less despondent.

The old Jew glanced from one to another, read them all, and enjoyed his triumph.

But when his eye returned to George Fielding, he met with something he had not reckoned upon.

The young man showed no joy, no emotion. He stood immovable, like a statue of a man, and when he opened his lips it was like a statue speaking with its marble mouth.

"No! Susan. No! old man. I *am* honest, though I'm poor—and proud, though you have seen me put to shame near my own homestead more than once to-day. To borrow without a chance of paying is next door to stealing; and I should never pay you. My eyes are opened in spite of my heart. I can't farm 'The Grove' with no grass, and wheat

* Let be who it will. *Cui libet.*

at forty shillings. I've tried all I know, and I can't do it. Will, there, is dying to try, and he shall try, and may Heaven speed his plough better than it has poor George's."

"I am not thinking of the farm now, George," said William. "I'm thinking of when we were boys, and used to play marbles—together—upon the tombstones." And he faltered a little.

"Mr. Levi! seems you have a kindness for me: show it to my brother when I'm away, if you *will* be so good."

"Hum!" said Isaac doubtfully. "I care not to see your stout young heart give way, as it will. Ah me! I can pity the wanderer from home. I will speak a word with you, and then I will go home."

He drew George aside, and made him a secret communication.

Merton called Susan to him, and made her promise to be prudent, then he shook hands with George, and went away.

Now Meadows, from the direction of Isaac's glance, and a certain half-surprised, half-contemptuous look that stole over George's face, suspected that his enemy, whose sagacity he could no longer doubt, was warning George against him.

This made him feel very uneasy where he was, and this respectable man dreaded some exposure of his secret. So he said hastily, "I'll go along with you, farmer," and in a moment was by Merton's side, as that worthy stopped to open the gate that led out of George's premises. His feelings were anything but pleasant when George called to him—

"No, sir! stop. You are as good a witness as I could choose of what I have to say. Step this way, if you please, sir."

Meadows returned, clenched his teeth, and prepared for the worst, but inwardly he cursed his uneasy folly in staying here, instead of riding home the moment George had said "Yes!" to Australia.

George now looked upon the ground a moment; and there was something in his manner that arrested the attention of all.

Meadows turned hot and cold.

"I am going—to speak—to my brother, Mr. Meadows!" said he, syllable by syllable to Meadows, in a way brimful of meaning.

"To me, George?" said William, a little uneasy.

"To you! Fall back a bit." (Some rustics were encroaching upon the circle.) "Fall back, if you please; this is a family matter."

Isaac Levi, instead of going quite away, seated himself on a bench outside the palings.

It was now William's turn to flutter; he said, however, to himself, "It is about the farm; it must be about the farm."

George resumed. "I've often had it on my mind to speak to you, but I was ashamed, now that's the truth; but now I am going away from her I must speak out, and I will—William!"

"Yes, George!"

"You've taken—a fancy—to my Susan, William!"

At these words, which, though they had cost him so much to say, George spoke gravely and calmly like common words, William gave one startled look all round, then buried his face directly in his hands in a paroxysm of shame.

Susan, who was looking at George, remonstrated loudly, "How can you be so silly, George! I am sure that is the last idea poor William——"

George drew her attention to William by a wave of the hand.

She held her tongue in a moment, and turned very red, and lowered her eyes to the ground. It was a very painful situation—to none more than to Meadows, who was waiting his turn.

George continued: "Oh, it is not to reproach you, my poor lad. Who could be near her, and not warm to her? But she *is* my lass, Will, and no other man's. It is three years since she said the word. And though it was my hard luck there should be some coolness between us this bitter day, she will think of me when the ocean rolls between us, if no villain undermines me——"

"Villain, George!" groaned William. "That is a word I never thought to hear from you."

"That's why I speak in time," said George. "I do suppose I am safe against villainy here." And his eye swept lightly over both the men. "Anyway, it shan't be a *mis*-take or a *mis*-understanding; it shall be villainy if *'tis* done. Speak, Susanna Merton, and speak your real mind once for all."

"Oh, George!" cried Susan, fluttering with love; "you

shall not go in doubt of me. We are betrothed this three years, and I never regretted my choice a single moment. I never saw, I never shall see, the man I could bear to look on beside you, my beautiful George. Take my ring and my promise, George." And she put her ring on his little finger, and kissed his hand. "Whilst you are true to me, nothing but death shall part us twain. There never was any coolness between us, dear; you only thought so. You don't know what fools women are; how they delight to tease the man they love, and so torment themselves ten times more. I always loved you, but never as I do to-day; *so* honest, *so* proud, so unfortunate; I love you, I honour you, I adore you, oh! my love!—my love!—my love!"

She saw but George—she thought but of George—and how to soften his sorrow, and remove his doubts, if he had any. And she poured out these words of love with her whole soul—with blushes and tears and all the fire of a chaste and passionate woman's heart. And she clung to her love; and her tender bosom heaved against his; and she strained him with tears and sighs to her bosom; and he kissed her beautiful head; and his suffering heart drew warmth from this heavenly contact.

The late exulting Meadows turned as pale as ashes, and trembled from head to foot.

"Do you hear, William?" said George.

"I hear, George," replied William, in an iron whisper, with his sullen head sunk upon his breast.

George left Susan, and came between her and William.

"Then, Susan," said he rather loud, "here is your brother."

William winced.

"William! here is my life!" And he pointed to Susan. "Let no man rob me of it if one mother really bore us."

It went through William's heart like a burning arrow. And this was why George had taken him to their mother's grave. That flashed across him too.

The poor sulky fellow's head was seen to rise inch by inch till he held it as erect as a king's.

"Never!" he cried, half-shouting, half-weeping. "Never, s'help me God! She's my sister from this hour—no more, no less. And may the red blight fall on my arm and my heart, if I or any man takes her from you—any man!" he cried, his temples flushing, and his eye glittering. "Sooner than a hundred men should take her

from you while I am here, I'd die at their feet a hundred times."

Well done, sullen and rugged but honest man; the capital temptation of your life is wrested with and thrown! That is always to every man a close, a deadly, a bitter struggle; and we must all wade through this deep water at one hour or another of our lives: it is as surely our fate as it is one day to die.

It is a noble sight to see an honest man "cleave his own heart in twain, and fling away the baser part of it." These words, that burst from William's better heart, knocked at his brother's, you may be sure. He came to William. "I believe you," said he; "I trust you, I thank you." Then he held out his hand; but nature would have more than that, in a moment his arm was round his brother's neck, where it had not been this many a year: he withdrew it as quickly, half-ashamed; and Anne Fielding's two sons grasped one another's hands, and, holding hands, turned away their heads and tried to hide their eyes.

They are stronger than bond, deed, or indenture, these fleshly compacts written by moist eyes, stamped by the gripe of eloquent hands in those moments full of soul when men's hearts beat from their bosoms to their fingers' ends.

Isaac Levi came to the brothers, and said to William, "Yes, I will now," and then he went slowly and thoughtfully away to his own house.

"And now," faltered George, "I feel strong enough to go, and I'll go."

He looked round at all the familiar objects he was leaving, as if to bid them farewell; and last, whilst every eye watched his movements, he walked slowly up to his grandfather's chair.

"Grandfather," said he, "I am going a long journey, and mayhap shall never see you again: speak a word to me before I go."

The impassive old man took no notice, so Susan came to him. "Grandfather, speak to George; poor George is going into a far country."

When she had repeated this in his ear, their grandfather looked up for a moment: "George, fetch me some snuff from where you're going."

A spasm crossed George's face; he was not to have a word of good omen from the aged man.

"Friends," said he, looking appealingly to all the rest, Meadows included, "I wanted him to say, God bless you, but snuff is all his thought now. Well, old man, George won't forget your last word, such as 'tis."

In a hutch near the corner of the house was William's pointer, Carlo. Carlo, observing by the general movement that there was something on foot, had the curiosity to come out to the end of his chain, and as he stood there giving every now and then a little uncertain wag of his tail, George took notice of him, and came to him, and patted his head.

"Good-bye, Carlo," faltered George; "poor Carlo—you and I shall never go after the partridges again, Carlo: the dog shows more understanding than the Christian: bye, Carlo." Then he looked wistfully at William's dog, but he said nothing more.

William watched every look of George, but he said nothing at the time.

"Good-bye, little village church, where I went to church man and boy; good-bye, churchyard, where my mother lies; there will be no church bells, Susan, where I am going; no Sunday bells to remind me of my soul and home."

These words, which he spoke with great difficulty, were hardly out of young Fielding's mouth when a very painful circumstance occurred; one of those things that seem the contrivance of some malignant spirit. The church bells, in a moment, struck up their very merriest peal!

George Fielding started, he turned pale, and his lips trembled. "Are they mocking me?" he cried. "Do they take a thought what I am going through this moment, the hard-hearted——"

"No! no! no!" cried William; "don't think it, George; I know what 'tis—I'll tell ye."

"What is it?"

"Well, it is—well, George, it is Tom Clarke and Esther Borgherst married to-day; only they couldn't have the ringers till the afternoon."

"Why, Will, they have only kept company a year, and Susan and I have kept company three years; and Tom and Esther are married to-day; and what are George and Susan doing to-day? God help me! Oh, God help me! What *shall* I do? what *shall* I do?" And the stout heart gave way, and George Fielding covered his face with his hands, and burst out sobbing and crying.

Susan flung her arms round his neck. "Oh! George, my pride is all gone; don't go, don't think to go; have pity on us both, and don't go." And she clung to him—her bonnet fallen off, her hair dishevelled—and they sobbed and wept in one another's arms.

Meadows writhed with the jealous anguish this sad sight gave him, and at that moment he could have cursed the whole creation. He tried to fly, but he was rooted to the spot. He leaned sick as death against the palings.

George and Susan cried together, and then they wiped one another's eyes like simple country folk with one pocket-handkerchief; and then they kissed one another in turn, and made each other's tears flow fast again; and again wiped one another's eyes with one handkerchief.

Meadows griped the palings convulsively—hell was in his heart.

"Poor souls, God help them!" said William to himself in his purified heart.

The silence their sorrow caused all around was suddenly invaded by a voice that seemed to come from another world—it was Grandfather Fielding. "The autumn sun is not so waarm as *she* used to be!"

Yes, there was the whole map of humanity on that little spot in the county of Berks. The middle-aged man, a schemer, watching the success of his able scheme, and stunned and wounded by its recoil. And old age, callous to noble pain, all alive to discomfort, yet man to the last—blaming anyone but Number One, cackling against heavenly bodies, accusing the sun and the kitchen-fire of frigidity—not his own empty veins! And the two poor young things sobbing as if their hearts would break over their first great earthly sorrow.

George was the first to recover himself. "Shame upon me!" he cried; he drew Susan to his bosom, and pressed a long, burning kiss upon her brow.

And now all felt the wrench was coming. George, with a wild, half-terrified look, signalled William to come to him.

"Help me, Will! You see, I have no more manhood than a girl."

Susan instinctively trembled. George once more pressed his lips to her, as if they would grow there. William took her hand. She trembled more and more.

"Take my hand; take your brother's hand, my poor lass," said he.

She trembled violently; and then George gave a cry that seemed to tear his heart, and darted from them in a moment.

Poor Susan uttered more than one despairing scream, and stretched out both her hands for George. He did not see her, for he dared not look back.

"Bob, loose the dog," muttered William hastily, in a broken voice.

The dog was loosed, and ran after George, who, he thought, was only going for a walk. Susan was sinking pale and helpless upon her brother's bosom.

"Pray, sister," said gentle William; "pray, sister, as I must."

A faint shiver was all the answer; her senses had almost left her.

When George was a little way up the hill, something ran suddenly against his legs—he started—it was Carlo. He turned, and lifted up his hands to Heaven; and William could see that George was blessing him for this. Carlo was more than a dog to poor George at that cruel moment. Soon after that, George and Carlo reached the crown of the hill. George's figure stood alone a moment between them and the sky. He was seen to take his hat off, and raise his hands once more to heaven, whilst he looked down upon all he loved and left, and then he turned his sorrowful face again towards that distant land—and they saw him no more!

CHAPTER IV.

"The world is full of trouble."

While we are young we do not see how true this ancient homely saying is.

That wonderful dramatic prologue, the first chapter of Job, is but a great condensation of the sorrows that fall like hail upon many a mortal house. Job's black day, like the day of the poetic prophets—the true *sacri vates* of the ancient world—is a type of a year—a bitter human year. It is terrible how quickly a human landscape, all gilded meadow, silver river, and blue sky, can cloud and darken.

George Fielding had compared himself this very day to an oak-tree, "Even so am I rooted to my native soil." His

fate accepted his simile. The oak of centuries yields to an impalpable antagonist, whose very name stands in proverbs for weakness and insignificance. This thin light trifle, rendered impetuous by motion, buffets the king of the forest, tears his roots with fury out of the earth, and lays his towering head in the dust; and even so circumstances, none of them singly irresistible, converging to one point, buffeted sore another oak, pride of our fields, and for aught I know of our whole island—an honest English yeoman; and tore him from his farm, from his house hard by his mother's grave, from the joy of his heart, his Susan, and sent him, who had never travelled a hundred miles in his life, across a world of waters to keep sheep at the Antipodes. A bereaved and desolate heart went with Farmer Dodd in the gig to Newborough; sad, desolate, and stricken hearts remained behind. When two loving hearts are torn bleeding asunder, it is a shade better to be the one that is driven away into action, than the bereaved twin that petrifies at home.

The bustle, the occupation, the active annoyances, are some sort of bitter distraction to the unfathomable grief—it is one little shade worse to lie solitary and motionless in the old scenes from which the sunlight is now fled.

It needed but a look at Susan Merton, as she sat moaning and quivering from head to foot in George's kitchen, to see that she was in no condition to walk back to Grassmere Farm to-night.

So as she refused—almost violently refused—to stay at "The Grove," William harnessed one of the farm-horses to a cart and took her home round by the road.

"It is six miles that way 'stead of three, but then we shan't jolt her going that way," thought William.

He walked by the side of the cart in silence.

She never spoke but once all the journey, and that was about half-way to complain in a sort of hopeless, pitiful tone that she was cold: it was a burning afternoon.

William took off his coat, and began to tie it round her by means of the sleeves; Susan made a little silent, peevish, and not very rational resistance; William tied it round her by brotherly force.

They reached her home; when she got out of the cart her eye was fixed, her cheek white, she seemed like one in a dream.

She went into the house without speaking or looking at

William. William was sorry she did not speak to him; however, he stood disconsolately by the cart, asking himself what he could do next for her and George; presently he heard a slight rustle, and it was Susan coming back along the passage. "She has left something in the cart," thought he, and he began to look in the straw.

She came like one still in a dream, and put her hand out to William, and it appeared that was what she had come back for.

William took her hand and pressed it to his bosom a moment; at this Susan gave a hysterical sob or two, and crept away again to her own room.

What she suffered in that room the first month after George's departure I could detail perhaps as well as any man living; but I will not; there is a degree of anguish one shrinks from intruding upon too familiarly in person: and even on paper the microscope should spare sometimes these beatings of the bared heart. It will be enough if I indicate by and by her state, after time and religion and good habits had begun to struggle, sometimes gaining, sometimes losing, against the tide of sorrow. For the present let us draw gently back and leave her, for she is bowed to the earth—fallen on her knees, her head buried in the curtains of her bed; dark, faint, and leaden, on the borders of despair—a word often lightly used through ignorance, Heaven keep us all from a single hour, here or hereafter of the thing the word stands for; and Heaven comfort all true and loving hearts that read me, when their turn shall come to drain the bitter cup, like Susan Merton.

CHAPTER V.

The moment George Fielding was out of sight, Mr. Meadows went to the public-house, flung himself on his powerful black mare, and rode homewards without a word. One strong passion after another swept across his troubled mind. He burned with love, he was sick with jealousy, cold with despondency, and, for the first time, smarted with remorse. George Fielding was gone, gone of his own accord; but like the flying Parthian he had shot his keenest arrow in the moment of defeat.

"What the better am I?" thus ran this man's thoughts.

"I have opened my own eyes, and Susan seems farther from me than ever now—my heart is like a lump of lead here—I wish I had never been born!—so much for scheming—I would have given a thousand pounds for this, and now I'd give double to be as I was before; I had honest hopes then; now where are they? How lucky it seemed all to go too. Ah! that is it—'May all your good luck turn to wormwood!' that was his word—his very word—and my good luck is wormwood; so much for lifting a hand against gray hairs, Jew or Gentile. Why did the old heathen provoke me then? I'd as soon die as live this day. That's right, start at a handful of straw; lie down in it one minute and tremble at the sight of it the next, ye idiot. Oh, Susan! Susan!—why do I think of her? why do I think of her? She loves that man with every fibre of her body. How she clung to him! how she grew to him! And I stood there and looked on it, and did not kill them both. Seen it! I see it now, it is burnt into my eyes and my heart for ever; I am in hell!—I am in hell!—Hold up, you blundering fool; has the devil got into you too? Perdition seize him! May he die and rot, before the year's out, ten thousand miles from home! may his ship sink to the bottom of the—— What right have I to curse the man, as well as drive him across the sea? Curse yourself, John Meadows. They are true lovers, and I have parted them, and looked on and seen their tears. Heaven pity them and forgive me. So he knew of his brother's love for her after all. Why didn't he speak to me, I wonder, as well as to Will Fielding? The old Jew warned him against me, I'll swear. Why? why, because you are a respectable man, John Meadows, and he thought a hint was enough to a man of character. 'I do suppose I am safe from villainy here,' says he. That lad spared me, he could have given me a red face before them all; now if there are angels that float in the air, and see what passes amongst us sinners, how must John Meadows have looked beside George Fielding that moment? This love will sink my soul! I can't breathe between these hedges, my temples are bursting! Oh! you want to gallop, do you? gallop then, and faster than you ever did since you were foaled—confound ye!" With this he spurred his mare furiously up the bank, and went crushing through the dead hedge that surmounted it; he struck his hat at the same moment fiercely from his head (it was fast by a black ribbon to his button-hole), and as they lighted by a descent

of some two feet on the edge of a grass-field he again drove his spurs into his great fiery mare, all vein and bone. Black Rachael snorted with amazement at the spur, and with warlike delight at finding grass beneath her feet and free air whistling round her ears; she gave one gigantic bound like a buck with arching back and all four legs in the air at once (it would have unseated many a rider, but never moved the iron Meadows), and with dilating nostril and ears laid back, she hurled herself across country like a stone from a sling.

Meadows' house was about four miles and a half distant as the crow flies, and he went home to-day as the crow flies, only faster. None would have known the staid, respectable Meadows, in this figure, that came flying over hedge and ditch and brook, his hat dangling and leaping like mad behind him, his hand now and then clutching his breast, his heart tossed like a boat among the breakers, his lips white, his teeth clenched, and his eyes blazing! The mare took everything in her stride, but at last they came somewhat suddenly on an enormous high stiff fence; to clear it was impossible; by this time man and beast were equally reckless; they went straight into it, and through it, as a bullet goes through a pane of glass; and on again over brook and fence, ploughed field and meadow, till Meadows found himself, he scarce knew how, at his own door. His old deaf servant came out from the stable-yard, and gazed in astonishment at the mare, whose flank panted, whose tail quivered, whose back looked as if she had been in the river, while her belly was stained with half a dozen different kinds of soil, and her rider's face streamed with blood from a dozen scratches he had never felt.

Meadows flung himself from the saddle, and ran up to his own room; he dashed his face and his burning hands into water: this seemed to do him a little good. He came downstairs; he lighted a pipe (we are the children of habit); he sat with his eyebrows painfully bent; people called on him, he fiercely refused to see them.

For the first time in his life he turned his back on business; he sat for hours by the fireplace; a fierce, mental struggle wrenched him to and fro.

Evening came, still he sat collapsed by the fireplace. From his window among other objects two dwellings were visible; one distant four miles was a whitewashed cottage, tiled instead of thatched, adorned with creepers and roses,

and very clean, but in other respects little superior to labourers' cottages.

The other, distant six long miles, was the Grassmere farm-house, where the Mertons lived; the windows seemed burnished gold this evening.

In the small cottage lived a plain, old woman—a Methodist; she was Meadows' mother.

She did not admire worldly people, still less envied them.

He was too good a Churchman and man of business, to permit conventicles or psalm-singing at odd hours in his house. So she preferred living in her own, which, moreover, was her own—her very own.

The old woman never spoke of her son, and checked all complaints of him, and snubbed all experimental eulogies of him.

Meadows never spoke of his mother; paid her a small allowance with the regularity and affectionate grace of clock-work; never asked her if she didn't want any more—would not have refused her if she had asked for double.

This evening, whilst the sun was shining with all his evening glory on Susan Merton's house, Meadows went slowly to his window and pulled down the blind; and, drawing his breath hard, shut the loved prospect out.

He then laid his hand upon the table, and he said, "I swear by the holy bread and wine I took last month, that I will not put myself in the way of this strong temptation. I swear I will go no more to Grassmere Farm, never so long as I love Susan." He added faintly, "Unless they send for me; and they won't do that; and I won't go of my own accord, I swear it. I have sworn it, however, and I swear it again—Unless they send for me!"

Then he sat by the fire with his head in his hands—a posture he never was seen in before; next he wrote a note, and sent it hastily with a horse and cart, to that small whitewashed cottage.

Old Mrs. Meadows sat in her doorway reading a theological work, called "Believers' Buttons." She took the note, looked at it. "Why, this is from John, I think; what can he have to say to me?" She put on her spectacles again, which she had taken off on the messenger first accosting her, and deliberately opened, smoothed, and read the note. It ran thus:—

"Mother, I am lonely, come over and stay awhile with me, if you please.—Your dutiful son, JOHN MEADOWS."

"Here, Hannah," cried the old woman to a neighbour's daughter that was nearly always with her.

Hannah, a comely girl of fourteen, came running in.

"Here's John wants me to go over to his house; get me the pen and ink, girl, out of the cupboard, and I'll write him a word or two, anyway. Is there anything amiss?" said she quickly to the man.

"He came in with the black mare all in a lather, just after dinner, and he hasn't spoke to a soul since, that's all I know, missus; I think something has put him out, and he isn't soon put out, you know, he isn't."

Hannah left the room, after placing the paper as she was bid.

"You will all be put out that trust to an arm of flesh, all of ye, master or man, Dick Messenger," said the disciple of John Wesley somewhat grimly. "Ay, and be put out in the kingdom of heaven, too, if ye don't take heed."

"Is that the news I'm to take back to Farnborough, missus?" said Messenger, with quiet rustic irony.

"No; I'll write to him."

The old woman wrote a few lines, reminding Meadows that the pursuit of earthly objects could never bring any steady comfort, and telling him that she should be lost in his great house—that it would seem quite strange to her to go into the town after so many years quiet—but that if he was minded to come out and see her, she would be glad to see him, and glad of the opportunity to give him her advice, if he was in a better frame for listening to it than last time she offered it to him, and that was two years come Martinmas.

Then the old woman paused—next she reflected—and afterwards dried her unfinished letter. And as she began slowly to fold it up, and put it in her pocket—"Hannah," cried she thoughtfully.

Hannah appeared in the doorway.

"I daresay—you may fetch—my cloak and bonnet. Why, if the wench hasn't got them on her arm. What, you made up your mind that I should go, then?"

"That I did," replied Hannah. "Your warm shawl is in the cart, Mrs. Meadows."

"Oh! you did, did you. Young folks are apt to be sure and certain—I was in two minds about it, so I don't see how the child could be sure, said she, dividing her remark

between vacancy and the person addressed; a grammatical privilege of old age.

"Oh! but *I* was sure, for that matter," replied Hannah firmly.

"And what made the little wench so sure, I wonder?" said the old woman, now in her black bonnet and scarlet cloak.

"Why, la!" says Hannah, "because it's your son, ma'am—and you're his mother, Dame Meadows!"

CHAPTER VI.

John Meadows had always been an active man, but now he was indefatigable. He was up at five every morning, and seemed ubiquitous; added a gray gelding to his black mare, and rode them both nearly off their legs. He surveyed land in half a dozen counties—he speculated in grain in half a dozen markets, and did business in shares. His plan in dealing with this ticklish speculation was simple: he listened to nothing anybody said, examined the venture himself, and if it had a sound basis, bought when the herd were selling, and sold whenever the herd were buying. Hence, he bought cheap and sold dear.

He also lent money, and contrived to solve the usurer's problem—perfect security, and huge interest.

He arrived at this by his own sagacity, and the stupidity of mankind.

Mankind are not wanting in intelligence; but, as a body, they have one intellectual defect—they are muddle-heads.

Now these muddle-heads have agreed to say that land is in all cases five times a surer security for money lent than movables are. Whereas the fact is that sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not. Owing to the above delusion, the proprietor of land can always borrow money at four per cent., and other proprietors are often driven to give ten—twenty—thirty.

So John Meadows lent mighty little upon land, but much upon oat-ricks, waggons, advantageous leases, and such things, solid as land, and more easily convertible into cash.

Thus without risk he got his twenty per cent. Not that he appeared in these transactions—he had too many good irons in the fire to let himself be called a usurer.

He worked this business as three thousand respectable men are working it in this nation. He had a human money-bag, whose strings he went behind a screen and pulled.

The human money-bag of Meadows was Peter Crawley.

This Peter Crawley, some years before our tale, lay crushed beneath a barrowful of debts—many of them to publicans. In him others saw a cunning fool and a sot—Meadows an unscrupulous tool: Meadows wanted a tool, and knew the cheapest way to get the thing was to buy it, so he bought up all Crawley's debts, sued him, got judgments out against him, and raising the axe of the law over Peter's head with his right hand, offered him the left hand of fellowship with his left; down on his knees went Crawley, and resigned his existence to this great man.

Human creatures, whose mission it is to do whatever a man secretly bids them, are not entitled to long and interesting descriptions.

Crawley was fifty, wore a brown wig, the only thing about him that did not attempt disguise, and slouched in a brown coat and a shirt peppered with snuff.

In this life he was an infinitesimal attorney: previously, unless Pythagoras was a goose, he had been a polecat.

Meadows was ambidexter. The two hands he gathered coin with were Meadows and Crawley. The first his honest, hard-working hand—the second his three-fingered Jack, his prestidigital hand; with both he now worked harder than ever. He hurried from business to business—could not wait to chat, or drink a glass of ale after it; it was all work! work! work!—money! money! money! with John Meadows, and everything he touched turned to gold in his hands; yet for all this burning activity, the man's heart had never been so little in business. His activity was the struggle of a sensible, strong mind to fight against its own weakness.

"Cedit amor rebus; res age tutus eris," is a very wise saying, and Meadows by his own observation and instinct, sought the best antidote for love.

But the Latins had another true saying, that "nobody is wise at all hours."

After his day of toil and success he used to be guilty of a sad inconsistency; he shut himself up at home for two hours, and smoked his pipe, and ran his eye over the newspaper—but his mind over Susan Merton.

Worse than this, in his frequent rides he used to go a mile or two out of his way to pass Grassmere farm-house; and however fast he rode the rest of his journey, he always let his nag walk by the farm-house, and his eye brightened with hope as he approached it, and his heart sank as he passed it without seeing Susan.

He now bitterly regretted the vow he had made, never to visit the Mertons again—unless they sent for him.

"They have forgotten me altogether," said he bitterly. "Well, the best thing I can do is to forget them."

Now, Susan had forgotten him, she was absorbed in her own grief; but Merton was labouring under a fit of rheumatism, and this was the reason why Meadows and he did not meet. In fact, farmer Merton often said to his daughter, "John Meadows has not been to see us a long while."

"Hasn't he, father?" was Susan's languid and careless reply.

One Sunday, Meadows, weakened by his inner struggle, could not help going to Grassmere church. At least he would see her face. He had seated himself where he could see her. She took her old place by the pillar; nobody was near her. The light from a side window streamed full upon her: she was pale, and the languor of sorrow was upon every part of her face, but she was lovely as ever.

Meadows watched her, and noticed that more than once, without any visible reason, her eyes filled with tears, but she shed none.

He saw how hard she tried to give her whole soul to the services of the church and to the word of the preacher; he saw her succeed for a few minutes at a time, and then, with a lover's keen eye, he saw her heart fly away in a moment from prayer and praise and consolation, and follow and overtake the ship that was carrying her George farther and farther away from her, across the sea; and then her lips quivered with earthly sorrow, even as she repeated words that came from Heaven, and tried to bind to her heavy heart the prayers for succour in every mortal ill, the promises of help in every mortal woe, with which Holy Church and Holier Writ comfort her and all the pure of heart in every age.

Then Meadows, who up to this moment had been pitying himself, had a better thought and pitied Susan. He even

went so far as to feel that he ought to pity George; but he did not do it, he could not, he envied him too much; but he pitied Susan, and he longed to say something kind and friendly to her, even though there should not be a word or a look of love in it.

Susan went out by one of the church doors, Meadows by another, intending to meet her casually upon the road home. Susan saw his intention, and took another path, so that he could not come up with her without following her.

Meadows turned upon his heel and went home with his heart full of bitterness.

"She hates the sight of me," was his interpretation.

Poor Susan, she hated nobody, she only hated to have to speak to a stranger, and to listen to a stranger; and in her present grief all were strangers to her except him she had lost and her father. She avoided Meadows not because he was Meadows, but because she wanted to be alone.

Meadows rode home despondently, then he fell to abusing his folly, and vowed he would think of her no more.

The next day, finding himself at six o'clock in the evening seated by the fire in a reverie, he suddenly started fiercely up, saddled his horse, and rode into Newborough, and, putting up his horse, strolled about the streets and tried to amuse himself looking at the shops before they closed.

Now it so happened that stopping before a bookseller's shop he saw advertised a work upon "The Australian Colonies."

"Confound Australia!" said Meadows to himself, and turned on his heel, but the next moment with a sudden change of mind he returned and bought the book: he did more, he gave the tradesman an order for every approved work on Australia that was to be had.

The bookseller, as it happened, was going up to London next day, so that in the evening Meadows had some dozen volumes in his house, and a tolerably correct map of certain Australian districts.

"Let me see," said Meadows, "what chance that chap has of making a thousand pounds out there." This was no doubt the beginning of it, but it did not end there. The intelligent Meadows had not read a hundred pages before he found out what a wonderful country this Australia is, how worthy a money-getter's attention or any thoughtful man's.

It seemed as if his rival drew Meadows after him wherever

he went, so fascinated was he with this subject. And now all the evening he sucked the books like a leech.

Men observed about this time an irritable manner in Mr. Meadows which he had never shown before, and an eternal restlessness; they little divined the cause, or dreamed what a vow he had made, and what it cost him every day to keep it. So strong was the struggle within him, that there were moments when he feared he should go mad; and then it was that he learned the value of his mother's presence in the house.

There was no explanation between them, there could be no sympathy; had he opened his heart to her he knew she would have denounced his love for Susan Merton as a damnable crime. Once she invited his confidence—

"What ails you, John?" said the old woman. "You had better tell me; you would feel easier, I'm thinking."

But he turned it off a little fretfully, and she never returned to the charge; but though there could be no direct sympathy, yet there was a soothing influence in this quaint old woman's presence. She moved quietly about, protecting his habits, not disturbing them; she seemed very thoughtful too, and cast many a secret glance of inquiry and interest at him when he was not looking at her.

This had gone on some weeks, when one afternoon Meadows, who had been silent as death for a full half-hour, started from his chair and said with sudden resolution—

"Mother, I must leave this part of the country for a while."

"That is news, John."

"Yes. I shall go into the mining district for six months, or a year perhaps."

"Well! go, John! you want a change. I think you can't do better than go."

"I will, and no later than to-morrow."

"That *is* sudden."

"If I was to give myself time to think, I should never go at all."

He went out briskly with the energy of this determination.

That same evening, about seven o'clock, as he sat reading by the fire, an unexpected visitor was announced, Mr. Merton.

He came cordially in and scolded Meadows for never having been to see him.

"I know you are a busy man," said the old farmer, "but

you might have given us a look in coming home from market; it is only a mile out of the way, and you are pretty well mounted in a general way."

Then the old man, a gossip, took up one of Meadows' books. "Australia! ah!" grunted Merton, and dropped it like a hot potato; he tried another, "Why, this is Australia, too; why, they are all Australia, as I am a living sinner." And he looked with a rueful curiosity into Meadows' face.

Meadows coloured, but soon recovered his external composure.

"I have friends there," said he hastily, "who tell me there are capital investments in that country, and they say no more than the truth."

"Do you think *he* will do any good out there?" asked the old man, lowering his voice.

"I can't say," answered Meadows drily.

"Tell us something about that country, John," said Merton; "and if you was to ask me to take a glass of your home-brewed ale I don't think I should gainsay you"

The ale was sent for, and over it Meadows, whose powers of acquisition extended to facts as well as money, and who was full of this new subject, poured the agricultural contents of a dozen volumes into Mr. Merton.

The old farmer sat open-mouthed, transfixed with interest, listening to his friend's clear, intelligent, and masterly descriptions of this wonderful land. At last the clock struck nine; he started up in astonishment—

"I shall get a scolding if I stay later," said he, and off he went to Grassmere.

"Have you nothing else to say to me?" asked Meadows, as the farmer put his foot in the stirrup.

"Not that I know of," replied the other, and cantered away.

"Confound him!" muttered Meadows; "he comes and stops here three hours, drinks my ale, gets my knowledge without the trouble of digging for't, and goes away, and not a word from Susan, or even a word about her--one word would have paid me for all the loss of time—but no, I was not to have it. I will be in Devonshire this time to-morrow—no, to-morrow is market-day—but the day after I will go. I cannot live here and not see her, nor speak to her—'twill drive me mad."

The next morning, as Meadows mounted his horse to ride to market, a carter's boy came up to him, and taking

off his hat, and pulling his head down by the front lock by way of salute, put a note into his hand.

Meadows took it and opened it carelessly; it was a handwriting he did not know. But his eye had no sooner glanced at the signature, than his eyes gleamed, and his whole frame trembled with emotion he could hardly hide. This was the letter:—

"DEAR MR. MEADOWS,—We have not seen you here a long time, and if you could take a cup of tea with us on your way home from market, my father would be glad to see you, if it is not troubling you too much. I believe he has some calves he wishes to show you.—I am, yours respectfully,

SUSAN MERTON.

"*P.S.*—Father has been confined by rheumatism, and I have not been well this last month."

Meadows turned away from the messenger, and said quietly, "Tell Miss Merton I will come if possible." He then galloped off, and as soon as there was no one in sight, gave vent to his face and his exulting soul.

Now he congratulated himself on his goodness in making a certain vow, and his firmness in keeping it.

"I kept out of their way, and they have invited me; my conscience is clear."

He then asked himself why Susan had invited him, and he could not but augur the most favourable results from this act on her part; true, his manner to her had never gone beyond friendship, but women, he argued, are quick to discern their admirers under every disguise. She was dull and out of spirits, and wrote for him to come to her; this was a great point, a good beginning. "The sea is between her and George, and I am here, with time and opportunity on my side," said Meadows; and as these thoughts coursed through his heart, his gray nag, spurred by an unconscious heel, broke into a hand-gallop, and after an hour and a half hard riding they clattered into the town of Newborough.

The habit of driving hard bargains is a good thing for teaching a man to suppress his feelings and feign indifference, yet the civil nonchalance with which Meadows, on his return from Newborough, walked into Merton's parlour cost him no ordinary struggle.

The farmer received him cordially—Susan civilly, and with a somewhat feeble smile. The farmer soon engaged him in agricultural talk. Susan meanwhile made the tea

in silence, and Meadows began to think she was capricious, and had no sooner got what she asked for than she did not care for it. After a while, however, she put in a word here and there, but with a discouraging languor.

Presently Farmer Merton brought her his tea-cup to be replenished: and upon this opportunity Susan said a word to her father in an undertone.

"Oh ay!" replied the farmer, very loud indeed; and Susan coloured.

"What was you saying to me about that country—that Christmas Day is the hottest day in the year?" began Mr. Merton.

Meadows assented, and Merton proceeded to put other questions, in order, it appeared, to draw once more from Meadows the interesting information of last night.

Meadows answered shortly, and with repugnance. Then Susan put in: "And is it true, sir, that the flowers are beautiful to the eye, but have no smell, and that the birds have all gay feathers, but no song?" Then Susan, scarcely giving him time to answer, proceeded to put several questions, and her manner was no longer languid, but bright and animated. She wound up her interrogatories with this climax—

"And *do* you think, sir, it is a country where George will be able to do any good? And will he have his health in that land, so far from everyone to take care of him?"

And this doubt raised, the bright eyes were dimmed with tears in a moment.

Meadows gasped out, "Why not? why not?" but soon after, muttering some excuse about his horse, he went out with a promise to return immediately.

He was no sooner alone than he gave way to a burst of rage and bitterness.

"So, she only sent for me here to make me tell her about that infernal country where her George is. I will ride home this instant—this very instant—without bidding them good-bye."

Cooler thoughts came. He mused deeply a few minutes, and then, clenching his teeth, returned slowly to the little parlour; he sat down and took his line with a brisk and cheerful air.

"You were asking me some questions about Australia. I can tell you all about that country, for I have a relation there who writes to me. And I have read all the books about it too, as it happens."

Susan brightened up.

Meadows, by a great histrionic effort, brightened up too, and poured out a flood of really interesting facts and anecdotes about this marvellous land.

Then, in the middle of a narrative which enchained both his hearers, he suddenly looked at his watch, and putting on a fictitious look of dismay and annoyance, started up with many excuses and went home—not, however, till Susan had made him promise to come again next market-day.

As he rode home in the moonlight, Susan's face seemed still before him. The bright look of interest she had given him, the grateful smiles with which she had thanked him for his narration—all this had been so sweet at the moment, so bitter upon the least reflection. His mind was in a whirl. At last he grasped at one idea, and held it as with a vice.

"I shall be always welcome to her if I can bring myself to talk about that detestable country. Well, I will grind my tongue down to it. She shall not be able to do without my chat; that shall be the beginning; the middle shall be different; the end shall be just the opposite. The sea is between him and her. I am here with opportunity, resolution, and money. I *will* have her!"

The next morning his mother said to him—

"John, do you think to go to-day?"

"Where, mother?"

"The journey you spoke of."

"What journey?"

"Among the mines."

"Not I."

"You have changed your mind, then.

"What, didn't you see I was joking?"

"No!"—very drily.

Soon after this little dialogue Dame Meadows proposed to end her visit and return home. Her son yielded a cheerful assent. She went gravely and quietly back to her little cottage.

Meadows had determined to make himself necessary to Susan Merton. He brought a woman's cunning to bear against a woman; for the artifice to which his strong will bent his supple talent is one that many women have had the tact and temporary self-denial to carry out, but not one man in a hundred.

Men try to beat an absent rival by sneering at him, etc.

By which means the asses make their absent foe present to her mind, and enlist the whole woman in his defence.

But Meadows was no ordinary man.

Susan had given his quick intelligence a glimpse of a way to please her: he looked at the end, and crushed his will down to the thorny means.

Twice a week he called on the Mertons, and much of his talk was Australia. Susan was grateful. To hear of the place where George would soon be was the nearest approach she could make to hearing of George.

As for Meadows, he gained a great point, but he went through tortures on the way. He could not hide from himself why he was so welcome; and many a time as he rode home from the Mertons he resolved never to return there, but he took no more oaths; it had cost him so much to keep the last; and that befell which might have been expected, after a while, the pleasure of being near the woman he loved, of being distinguished by her and greeted with pleasure, however slight, grew into a habit and a need.

Achilles was a man of steel, but he had a vulnerable part; and iron natures like John Meadows have often one spot in their souls where they are far tenderer than the universal dove-eyed, and weaker than the omnipotent. He never spoke a word of love to Susan, he knew it would spoil all; and she, occupied with another's image, and looking upon herself as confessedly belonging to another, never suspected the deep passion that filled this man's heart. But if an observer of nature had accompanied John Meadows on market-day he might have seen—diagnostics.

All the morning his eye was cold and quick; his mouth, when silent, close, firm, and unreadable; his voice clear, decided, and occasionally loud. But when he got to old Merton's fireside he mellowed and softened like the sun towards evening: there his forehead unknit itself; his voice, pitched in quite a different key from his key of business, turned also low and gentle, and soothed and secretly won the hearer by its deep, rich, and pleasant modulation and variety; and his eye turned deeper in colour, and, losing its keenness and restlessness, dwelt calmly and pensively for minutes at a time upon some little household object close to Susan; seldom, unless quite unobserved, upon Susan herself.

But the surrounding rustics suspected nothing, so calm and deep ran Meadows.

"Dear heart," said Susan to her father, "who would have thought Mr. Meadows would come a mile out of his way twice a week to talk to me about Geo—about the country where my heart is—and the folk say he thinks of nothing but money, and won't move a step without making it."

"The folk are envious of him, girl—that is all. John Meadows is too clever for fools, and too industrious for the lazy ones; he is a good friend of mine, Susan; if I wanted to borrow a thousand pounds I have only to draw on Meadows; he has told me so half a dozen times."

"We don't want his money, father," replied Susan, "nor anybody's; but I think a great deal of his kindness, and George shall thank him when he comes home—if ever he comes home to Susan again." These last words brought many tears with them, which the old farmer pretended not to notice, for he was getting tired of his daughter's tears. They were always flowing now at the least word, "and she used to be so good-humoured and cheerful like."

Poor Susan! she was very unhappy. If anyone had said to her "to-morrow you die," she would have smiled on her own account, and only sighed at the pain the news would cause poor George. Her George was gone, her mother had been dead this two years. Her life, which had been full of innocent pleasures, was now utterly tasteless, except in its hours of bitterness, when sorrow overcame her like a flood. She had a pretty flower-garden, in which she used to work. When George was at home what pleasure it had been to plant them with her lover's help, to watch them expand, to water them in the summer evening, to smell their gratitude for the artificial shower after a sultry day, and then to have George in, and set him admiring them with such threadbare enthusiasm, simply because they were hers, not in the least because they were Nature's.

I will go back like the epic writers, and sketch one of their little garden scenes.

One evening, after watering them all, she sat down on a seat at the bottom of the garden, and casting her eyes over her whole domain, said, "Well now, I do admire flowers; don't you, George?"

"That I do," replied George, taking another seat, and coolly turning his back on the parterre, and gazing mildly into Susan's eyes.

"Why, he is not even looking at them!" cried Susan, and she clapped her hands and laughed gleefully.

"Oh yes, he is; leastways he is looking at one of them, and the brightest of the lot, to my fancy."

Susan coloured with pleasure. In the country compliments don't drip constantly on beauty even from the lips of love. Then, suppressing her satisfaction, she said, "You will look for a flower in return for that, young man; come and let us see whether there is one good enough for you." So then they took hands, and Susan drew him demurely about the garden. Presently she stopped with a little start of hypocritical admiration: at their feet shone a marigold. Susan culled the gaudy flower, and placed it affectionately in George's button-hole. He received it proudly, and shaking hands with her, for it was time to part, turned away slowly. She let him take a step or two, then called him back. "He was really going off with that nasty thing." She took it out of his button-hole, rubbed it against his nose with well-feigned anger, and then threw it away.

"You are all behind in flowers, George," said Susan; "here, this is good enough for you," and she brought out from under her apron, where she had carried the furtively-culled treasure, a lovely clove-pink: pretty soul, she had nursed, and watered, and cherished this choice flower this three weeks past for George, and this was her way of giving it him at last; so a true woman gives—her life, if need be. George took it, and smelled it, and lingered a moment at the garden-gate, and moralised on it. "Well, Susan dear, now I'm not so deep in flowers as you, but I like this a deal better than the marigold, and I'll tell you for why: it is more like you, Susan."

"Ay! why?"

"I see flowers that are pretty, but have no smell, and I see women that have good looks, but no great wisdom nor goodness when you come nearer to them. Now the marigold is like those lasses, but this pink is good as well as pretty, so then it will stand for you, when we are apart, as we mostly are—worse luck for me."

"Oh, George," said Susan, dropping her quizzing manner, "I am a long way behind the marigold or any flower in comeliness and innocence; but at least, I wish I was better."

"I don't."

"Ay, but I do, ten times better, for—for——"

"For why, Susan?"

Susan closed the garden-gate, and took a step towards

the house. Then turning her head over her shoulder with an ineffable look of tenderness, tipped with one tint of lingering archness, she let fall, "For your sake, George," in the direction of George's feet, and glided across the garden into the house.

George stood watching her: he did not at first take up all she had bestowed on him, for her sex has a peculiar mastery over language, being diabolically angelically subtle in the art of saying something that expresses an ounce and implies a hundredweight; but when he did comprehend, his heart exulted. He strode home as if he trod on air, and often kissed the little flower he had taken from the beloved hand, "and with it words of so sweet breath composed, as made the thing more rich;" and as he marched past the house kissing the flower, need I tell my reader that so innocent a girl as Susan was too high-minded to watch the effect of her proceedings from behind the curtains? I hope not, it would surely be superfluous to relate what none would be green enough to believe.

These were Susan's happy days: now all was changed: she hated to water her flowers now; she bade one of the farm-servants look to the garden. He accepted the charge, and her flowers' drooping heads told how nobly he had fulfilled it. Susan was charitable. Every day it had been her custom to visit more than one poor person: she carried meal to one, soup to another, linen to another, meat and bread to another, money to another: to all, words and looks of sympathy; this practice she did not even now give up, for it came under the head of her religious duties, but she relaxed it. She often sent to places where she used to go. Until George went, she had never thought of herself; and so the selfishness of those she relieved had not struck her: now it made her bitter to see that none of those she pitied, pitied her. The moment she came into their houses, it was, "*My* poor head, Miss Merton; *my* old bones do ache so.

"I think a bit of your nice bacon would do ME good. I'M a poor sufferer, Miss Merton. *My* boy is 'listed. I thought as how you'd forgotten *me* altogether: but 'tis hard for poor folk to keep a friend.

"You see, miss, *my* bedroom window is broken in one or two places. John, he stopped it up with paper the best way he could, but la, bless you, paper bain't like glass. It is very dull for *me*: you see, miss, I can't get about now as

I used to could, and I never was no great reader. I often wish as someone would step in and knock me on the head, for I be no use, I bain't, ne'er a mossel." No one of them looked up in her face, and said, "Lauks! how pale *you* ha' got to look, miss; I hopes as how nothing amiss haven't happened to *you*, that have been so kind to us this many a day:" yet suffering of some sort was plainly stamped on the face and in the manner of this relieving angel. When they poured out their vulgar woes, Susan made an effort to forget her own and to cheer as well as relieve them: but she had to compress her own heart hard to do it; and this suppression of feeling makes people more or less bitter: she had better have out with it, and scolded them well for talking as if they alone were unhappy; but her woman's nature would not let her. They kept asking her for pity, and she still gulped down her own heart and gave it them, till at last she began to take a spite against her pets, so then she sent to most of them instead of going. She sent rather larger slices of beef and bacon, and rather more yards of flannel than when she used to carry the like to them herself. Susan had one or two young friends, daughters of farmers in the neighbourhood, with whom she was a favourite, though the gayer ones sometimes quizzed her for her religious tendencies, and her lamentable indifference to flirtation: but then she was so good, and so good-humoured, and so tolerant of other people's tastes. The prattle of these young ladies became now intolerable to Susan, and when she saw them coming to call on her, she used to snatch up her bonnet, and fly and lock herself up in a closet at the top of the house, and read some good book as quiet as a mouse, till the servants had hunted for her, and told them she must be out. She was not in a frame of mind to sustain tarlatans, barege, the history of the last hop, and the prophecies of the next; the wounded deer shrank from its gambolling associates, and indeed from all strangers except John Meadows. "He talks to me about something worth talking about," said Susan Merton. It happened one day while Susan was in this sad, and, I may say, dangerous state of mind, that the servant came up to her, and told her a gentleman was on his horse at the door, and wanted to see Mr. Merton.

"Father is at market, Jane."

"Yes, miss, but I told the gentleman you were at home."

"Me! what have I to do with father's visitors?"

"Miss," replied Jane mystericusly, "it is a parson, and you are so fond of them, I could not think to let him go away without getting a word with anybody; and he has such a face—la, miss, you never saw such a face."

"Silly girl, what have I to do with handsome faces?"

"But he is not handsome, miss, not in the least, only he is beautiful. You go and see else."

"I hate strangers' faces; but I will go to him, Jane; it is my duty since it is a clergyman. I will just go upstairs."

"La, miss, what for? you are always neat, you are—nobody ever catches you in your dishables like the rest of 'em."

"I'll just smooth my hair."

"La, miss, what for? it is smooth as marble—it always is."

"Where is he, Jane?"

"In the front parlour."

"I won't be a moment."

She went upstairs. There was no necessity; Jane was right there, but it was a strict custom in the country, and is for that matter, and will be till time and vanity shall be no more: *more majorum,* a girl must go up and look at herself in the glass if she did nothing more, before coming in to receive company.

Susan entered the parlour; she came in so gently that she had a moment to observe her visitor before he saw her. He had seated himself with his back to the light, and was devouring a stupid book on husbandry that belonged to her father. The moment she closed the door he saw her, and rose from his seat.

"Miss Merton?"

"Yes, sir."

"The living of this place has been vacant more than a month."

"Yes, sir."

"It will not be filled up for three months, perhaps."

"So we hear, sir."

"Meantime you have no church to go to nearer than Barmstoke, which is a chapel-of-ease to this place, but two miles distant."

"Two miles and a half, sir."

"So then the people here have no Divine service on the Lord's day."

"No, sir, not for the present," said Susan meekly,

lowering her lashes; as if the clergyman had said, "this is a parish of heathens, whereof you are one."

"Nor any servant of God to say a word of humility and charity to the rich, of eternal hope to the poor, and" (here his voice sank into sudden tenderness) "of comfort to the sorrowful."

Susan raised her eyes, and looked him over with one dove-like glance, then instantly lowered them.

"No, sir, we are all under a cloud here," said Susan sadly.

"Miss Merton, I have undertaken the duty here until the living shall be filled up; but you shall understand that I live thirty miles off, and have other duties, and I can only ride over here on Saturday afternoon, and back Monday at noon."

"Oh, sir!" cried Susan, "half a loaf is better than no bread! The parish will bless you, sir, and no doubt," added she timidly, "the Lord will reward you, for coming so far to us!"

"I am glad you think so," said the clergyman thoughtfully. "Well, let us do the best we can: tell me first, Miss Merton, do you think the absence of a clergyman is regretted here?"

"Regretted, sir! dear heart, what a question: you might as well ask me, do father's turnips long for rain after a month's drought;" and Susan turned on her visitor a face into which the innocent venerating love her sex have for an ecclesiastic flashed without disguise.

Her companion smiled, but it was with benevolence, not with gratified vanity.

"Let me now explain my visit. Your father is one of the principal people in the village. He can assist me or thwart me in my work. I called to invite his co-operation. Some clergymen are jealous of co-operation, I am not: it is a good thing for all parties; best of all for those who co-operate with us; for in giving alms wisely they receive grace, and in teaching the ignorant they learn themselves. Am I right?" added he rather sharply, turning suddenly upon Susan.

"Oh, sir," said Susan, a little startled, "it is for me to receive your words, not to judge them."

"Humph!" said the reverend gentleman, rather drily; he hated intellectual subserviency: he liked people to think for themselves; and to end by thinking with him.

"Father will never thwart you, sir, and I—I will co-operate with you, sir, if you will accept of me," said Susan innocently.

"Thank you, then let us begin at once." He took out his watch. "I have an hour and a half to spare, then I must gallop back to Oxford. Miss Merton, I should like to make acquaintance with some of the people. Suppose we go to the school, and see what the children are learning; and then visit one or two families in the village, so I shall catch a glimpse of the three generations I have to deal with. My name is Francis Eden. You are going to get your bonnet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you."

They passed out through the garden. Mr. Eden stopped to look at the flowers. Susan coloured.

"It has been rather neglected of late," said she apologetically.

"It must have been very well taken care of before, then," said he, "for it looks charming now. Ah! I love flowers dearly," and he gave a little sigh.

They reached the school, and Mr. Eden sat down and examined the little boys and girls. When he sat down, Susan winced. How angry he will be at their ignorance! thought Susan. But Mr. Eden, instead of putting on an awful look, and impressing on the children that a being of another generation was about to attack them, made himself young to meet their minds. A pleasant smile disarmed their fears. He spoke to them in very simple words and childish idioms, and told them a pretty story, which interested them mightily. Having set their minds really working, he put questions arising fairly out of his story, and so fathomed the moral sense and the intelligence of more than one. In short, he drew the brats out instead of crushing them in. Susan stood by, at first startled at the line he took, then observant, then approving. Presently he turned to her—

"And which is your class, Miss Merton?"

Susan coloured.

"I take these little girls when I come, sir."

"Miss Merton has not been here this fortnight," said a pert teacher.

Susan could have beat her. What will this good man think of me now? thought poor Susan.

To her grateful relief, the good man took no notice of the observation; he looked at his watch.

"Now, Miss Merton, if I am not giving you too much trouble;" and they left the school.

"You wish to see some of the folk in the village, sir?"

"Yes."

"Where shall I take you first, sir?"

"Where I ought to go first."

Susan looked puzzled.

Mr. Eden stopped dead short.

"Come, guess," said he, with a radiant smile, "and don't look so scared. I'll forgive you if you guess wrong."

Susan looked this way and that, encouraged by his merry smile. She let out—scarce above a whisper, and in a tone of interrogation, as who should say this is not to be my last chance since I have only asked a question, not risked an answer—

"To the poorest, Mr. Eden?"

"Bravo! she has guessed it," cried the Rev. Frank triumphantly; for he had been more anxious she should answer right than she had herself. "Young lady, I have friends with their heads full of Latin and Greek who could not have answered that so quickly as you; one proof more how goodness brightens intelligence," added he in soliloquy. "Here's a cottage."

"Yes, sir, I was going to take you into this one, if you please."

They found in the cottage a rheumatic old man, one of those we alluded to as full of his own complaints. Mr. Eden heard these with patience, and then, after a few words of kind sympathy and acquiescence, for he was none of those hard humbugs who tell a man that old age, rheumatism, and poverty are strokes with a feather, he said quietly—

"And now for the other side; now tell me what you have to be grateful for."

The old man was taken aback, and his fluency deserted him. On the question being repeated, he began to say that he had many mercies to be thankful for. Then he higgled and hammered and fumbled for the said mercies, and tried to enumerate them, but in phrases conventional and derived from tracts and sermons; whereas his statement of grievances had been idiomatic.

"There, that will do," said Mr. Eden, smiling, "say

nothing you don't feel; what is the use? May I ask you a few questions?" added he courteously; then, without waiting for permission, he dived skilfully into this man's life, and fished up all the pearls—the more remarkable passages.

Many years ago this old man had been a soldier, had fought in more than one great battle, had retreated with Sir John Moore upon Corunna, and been one of the battered and weary but invincible band, who wheeled round and stunned the pursuers on that bloody and glorious day. Mr. Eden went with the old man to Spain, discussed with great animation the retreat, the battle, the position of the forces, and the old soldier's personal prowess. Old Giles perked up, and dilated, and was another man; he forgot his rheumatism, and even his old age. Twice he suddenly stood upright as a dart on the floor, and gave the word of command like a trumpet in some brave captain's name; and his cheek flushed, and his eye glittered with the light of battle. Susan looked at him with astonishment. Then when his heart was warm and his spirits attentive, Mr. Eden began to throw in a few words of exhortation. But even then he did not bully the man into being a Christian; gently, firmly, and with a winning modesty, he said, "I think you have much to be thankful for, like all the rest of us. Is it not a mercy you were not cut off in your wild and dissolute youth? You might have been slain in battle."

"That I might, sir; three of us went from this parish, and only one came home again."

"You might have lost a leg or an arm, as many a brave fellow did; you might have been a cripple all your days."

"That is true, sir."

"You survive here in a Christian land, in possession of your faculties: the world, it is true, has but few pleasures to offer you—all the better for you. Oh, if I could but make that as plain to you as it is to me. You have every encouragement to look for happiness there, where alone it is to be found. Then courage, corporal; you stood firm at Corunna—do not give way in this your last and more glorious battle. The stake is greater than it was at Vittoria, or Salamanca, or Corunna, or Waterloo. The eternal welfare of a single human soul weighs a thousand times more than all the crowns and empires in the globe. You are in danger, sir. Discontent is a great enemy of the soul. You must pray against it—you must fight against it."

"And so I will, sir; you see if I don't."

"You read, Mr. Giles?" Susan had told Mr. Eden his name at the threshold.

"Yes, sir: but I can't abide them nasty little prints they bring me."

"Of course you can't. Printed to sell, not to read, eh? Here is a book. The type is large, clear, and sharp. This is an order-book, corporal. It comes from the great Captain of our salvation. Every sentence in it is gold; yet I think I may safely pick out a few for your especial use at present." And Mr. Eden sat down; and producing from his side-pockets, which were very profound, some long, thin slips of paper, he rapidly turned the leaves of the Testament and inserted his markers; but this occupation did not for a moment interrupt his other proceedings.

"There is a pipe—you don't smoke, I hope?"

"No, sir: leastways not when I han't got any baccy, and I've been out of that this three days, worse luck."

"Give up smoking, corporal; it is a foul habit."

"Ah, sir! you don't ever have a half-empty belly and a sorrowful heart, or you wouldn't tell an old soldier to give up his pipe."

"Take my advice. Give up all such false consolation, to oblige me, now."

"Well, sir, to oblige you, I'll try; but you don't know what his pipe is to a poor old man full of nothing but aches and pains, or you wouldn't have asked me," and old Giles sighed. Susan sighed too, for she thought Mr. Eden cruel for once.

"Miss Merton," said the latter sternly, his eye twinkling all the time, "he is incorrigible; and I see you agree with me that it is idle to torment the incurable. So" (diving into the capacious pocket) "here is an ounce of his beloved poison," and out came a paper of tobacco. Corporal's eyes brightened with surprise and satisfaction. "Poison him, Miss Merton, poison him quick, don't keep him waiting."

"Poison him, sir?"

"Fill his pipe for him, if you please."

"That I will, sir, with pleasure." A white hand, with quick and supple fingers, filled the brown pipe.

"That is as it should be, let beauty pay honour to courage; above all, to courage in its decay."

The old man grinned with gratified pride. The white hand lighted the pipe, and gave it to the old soldier.

He smiled gratefully all round, and sucked his homely consolation.

"I compound with you, corporal. You must let me put you on the road to heaven, and, in return, I must let you go there in a cloud of tobacco—ugh!"

"I'm agreeable, sir," said Giles drily, withdrawing his pipe for a moment.

"There," said Mr. Eden, closing the marked Testament, "read often in this book. Read first the verses I have marked, for these very verses have dropped comfort on the poor, the aged, and the distressed for more than eighteen hundred years, and will till time shall be no more. And now, good-bye, and God bless you."

"God bless you, sir, wherever you go," cried the old man, with sudden energy, "for you have comforted my poor old heart. I feel as I han't felt this many a day: your words are like the bugles sounding a charge all down the line. You must go, I suppose; but do ye come again and see me. And, Miss Merton, you never come to see me now, as you used."

"Miss Merton has her occupations, like the rest of us," said Mr. Eden quickly; "but she will come to see you—won't she?"

"Oh yes, sir!" replied Susan hastily. So then they returned to the farm, for Mr. Eden's horse was in the stable. At the door they found Mr. Merton.

"This is father, sir. Father, this is Mr. Eden, that is coming to take the duty here for awhile."

After the ordinary civilities, Susan drew her father aside, and exchanging a few words with him, disappeared into the house. As Mr. Eden was mounting his horse, Mr. Merton came forward, and invited him to stay at his house whenever he should come to the parish. Mr. Eden hesitated.

"Sir," said the farmer, "you will find no lodgings comfortable within a mile of the church, and we have a large house not half occupied. You can make yourself quite at home."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Merton, but must not trespass too far upon your courtesy."

"Well, sir," replied the farmer, "we shall feel proud if you can put up with the like of us."

"I will come. I am much obliged to you, sir, and to your daughter."

He mounted his horse and bade the farmer good-morning.

Susan came out and stood on the steps and curtsied low—rustic fashion—but with a grace of her own. He took off his hat to her as he rode out of the gate, gave her a sweet, bright smile of adieu, and went down the lane fourteen miles an hour. Old Giles was seated outside his own door with a pipe and a book. At the sound of horses' feet he looked up, and recognised his visitor, whom he had seen pass in the morning. He rose up erect and saluted him, by bringing his thumb with a military wave to his forehead. Mr. Eden saluted him in the same manner, but without stopping. The old soldier sat down again, and read and smoked. The pipe ended—that solace was not of an immortal kind—but the book remained; he read it calmly, but earnestly, in the warm air till day declined.

CHAPTER VII.

The next Saturday Susan was busy preparing two rooms for Mr. Eden—a homely but bright bedroom looking eastward, and a snug room where he could be quiet downstairs. Snowy sheets and curtains and toilet-cover showed the good housewife. The windows were open, and a beautiful nosegay of Susan's flowers on the table. Mr. Eden's eye brightened at the comfort, neatness, and freshness of the whole thing; and Susan, who watched him furtively, felt pleased to see him pleased.

On Sunday he preached in the parish church. The sermon was opposite to what the good people here had been subject to; instead of the vague and cold generalities of an English sermon, he drove home-truths home in business-like English. He used a good many illustrations, and these were drawn from matters with which this particular congregation were conversant. He was as full of similes here as he was sparing of them when he preached before the University of Oxford. Anyone who had read this sermon in a book of sermons would have divined what sort of congregation it was preached to—a primrose of a sermon. Mr. Eden preached from notes and to the people—not the air. Like every born orator, he felt his way with his audience, whereas the preacher, who is not an orator, throws out his fine things, hit or miss, and does not know and feel and care whether he is hitting or missing. "Open

your hand, shut your eyes, and fling out the good seeds so much per foot—that is enough." No. This man preached to the faces and hearts that happened to be round him. He established between himself and them a pulse, every throb of which he felt and followed. If he could not get hold of them one way, he tried another; he would have them—he was not there to fail. His discourse was human; it was man speaking to man on the most vital and interesting topic in the world or out of it; it was more, it was brother speaking to brother. Hence some singular phenomena: First, when he gave the blessing (which is a great piece of eloquence commonly reduced to a very small one by monotonous or feeble delivery), and uttered it, like his discourse, with solemnity, warmth, and tenderness, and all his soul, the people lingered some moments in the church and seemed unwilling to go at all; second, nobody mistook their pew for their four-poster during the sermon. This was the more remarkable, as many of the congregation had formed a steady habit of coming to this place once a week with the single view of snatching an hour's repose from earthly and heavenly cares.

The next morning Mr. Eden visited some of the poorest people in the parish. Susan accompanied him, all eyes and ears; she observed that his line was not to begin by dictating his own topic, but lie in wait for them; let them first choose their favourite theme, and so meet them on this ground, and bring religion to bear on it. "Oh, how wise he is!" thought Susan, "and how he knows the heart!"

One Sunday evening, three weeks after his first official visit, he had been by himself to see some of the poor people, and on his return found Susan alone. He sat down and gave an account of his visits.

"How many ounces of tea and tobacco did you give away, sir?" asked Susan, with an arch smile.

"Four tea, two tobacco," replied the reverend gentleman.

"I do notice, sir, you never carry gingerbread or the like for the children."

"No; the young don't want lollypops, for they have youth. Old age wants everything, so the old are my children, and I tea and tobacco them."

After this there was a pause.

"Miss Merton, you have shown me many persons who need consolation, but there is one you say nothing about."

"Have I, sir! Who? Oh, I think I know. Old Dame Clayton?"

"No, it is a young demoiselle."

"Then I don't know who it can be."

"Guess."

"No, sir," said Susan, looking down.

"It is yourself, Miss Merton."

"Me, sir! Why, what is the matter with me?"

"That you shall tell me, if you think me worthy of your confidence."

"Oh, thank you, sir. I have my little crosses, no doubt, like all the world; but I have health and strength. I have my father."

"My child, you are in trouble. You were crying when I came in."

"Indeed, I was not, sir!—how did you know I was crying?"

"When I came in you turned your back to me, instead of facing me, which is more natural when anyone enters a room; and soon after you made an excuse for leaving the room, and when you came back there was a drop of water in your right eyelash."

"It need not have been a tear, sir!"

"It was not, it was water; you had been removing the traces of tears."

"Girls are mostly always crying, sir; often they don't know for why, but they don't care to have it noticed always."

"Nor would it be polite or generous; but this of yours is a deep grief, and alarms me for you. Shall I tell you how I know? You often yawn and often sigh; when these two things come together at your age, they are signs of a heavy grief; then it comes out that you have lost your relish for things that once pleased you. The first day I came here you told me your garden had been neglected of late, and you blushed in saying so. Old Giles and others asked you before me why you had given up visiting them; you coloured and looked down. I could almost have told them, but that would have made you uncomfortable. You are in grief, and no common grief."

"Nothing worth speaking to you about, sir; nothing I will ever complain of to anyone."

"There I think you are wrong; religion has consoled many griefs; great griefs admit of no other consolation.

The sweetest exercise of my office is to comfort the heavy-hearted. Your heart is heavy, my poor lamb—tell me—what is it?"

"It is nothing, sir, that you would understand; you are very skilled, and notice-taking, as well as good, sir, but you are not a woman, and you must excuse me, sir, if I beg you not to question me further on what would not interest you."

Mr. Eden looked at her compassionately, and merely said to her again, "What is it?" in a low tone of ineffable tenderness.

At this Susan looked in a scared manner this way and that. "Sir, do not ask me, pray, do not ask me so;" then she suddenly lifted her hands, "My George is gone across the sea! What shall I do! what shall I do!!" and she buried her face in her apron.

This burst of pure Nature—this simple cry of a suffering heart—was very touching; and Mr. Eden, spite of his many experiences, was not a little moved. He sat silent, looking on her as an angel might be supposed to look upon human griefs, and as he looked on her, various expressions chased one another across that eloquent face. Sweet and tender memories and regrets were not wanting amongst them. After a long pause he spoke in a tone soft and gentle as a woman's, and at first in a voice so faltering, that Susan, though her face was hidden, felt there was no common sympathy there, and silently put out her hand towards it.

He murmured consolation. He said many gentle, soothing things. He told her that it was sad—very sad the immense ocean should roll between two loving hearts, "but," said he, "there are barriers more impassable than the sea. Better so than that he should be here, and jealousy, mistrust, caprice, or even temper come between you. I hope he will come back; I think he will come back."

She blessed him for saying so. She was learning to believe everything this man uttered.

From consolation he passed to advice—

"You must do the exact opposite of what you have been doing."

"Must I?"

"You must visit those poor people; ay, more than ever you did; hear patiently their griefs; do not expect much in

return, neither sympathy nor a great deal of gratitude; vulgar sorrow is selfish. Do it for God's sake and your own single-heartedly. Go to the school, return to your flowers, and never shun innocent society, however dull. Milk and water is a poor thing, but it is a diluent, and all we can do just now is to dilute your grief."

He made her promise: "Next time I come, tell me all about you and George. Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break."

"Oh! that is a true word," sobbed Susan, "that is very true. Why, a little of the lead seems to have dropped off my heart now I have spoken to you, sir."

All the next week Susan bore up as bravely as she could, and did what Mr. Eden had bade her, and profited by his example. She learned to draw from others the full history of their woes; and she found that many a grief bitter as her own had passed over the dwellers in those small cottages; it did her some little good to discover kindred woes, and much good to go out of herself awhile and pity them.

This drooping flower recovered her head a little, but still the sweetest hour in all the working days of the week was that which brought John Meadows to talk to her of Australia.

CHAPTER VIII.

Susan Merton had two unfavoured lovers; it is well to observe how differently these two behaved. William Fielding stayed at home, threw his whole soul into his farm, and seldom went near the woman he loved but had no right to love. Meadows dangled about the flame; ashamed and afraid to own his love, he fed it to a prodigious height by encouraging it and not expressing it. William Fielding was moody and cross and sad enough at times; but at others, a little spark ignited inside his heart, and a warm glow diffused itself from that small point over all his being. I think this spark igniting was an approving conscience commencing its uphill work of making a disappointed lover, but honest man, content.

Meadows, on his part, began to feel content and a certain complacency take the place of his stormy feelings. Twice a

week he passed two hours with Susan. She always greeted him with a smile, and naturally showed an innocent satisfaction in these visits, managed as they were with so much art and self-restraint. On Sunday, too, he had always a word or two with her.

Meadows, though an observer of religious forms, had the character of a very worldly man, and Susan thought it highly to his credit that he came six miles to hear Mr. Eden.

"But, Mr. Meadows, your poor horse," said she, one day. "I doubt it is no Sabbath to him now."

"No more it is," said Meadows, as if a new light came to him from Susan. The next Sunday he appeared in dusty shoes instead of top-boots.

Susan looked down at them, and saw, and said nothing, but she smiled. Her love of goodness and her vanity were both gratified a little.

Meadows did not stop there; wherever Susan went, he followed modestly in her steps. Nor was this mere cunning. He loved her quite well enough to imitate her, and try and feel with her; and he began to be kinder to the poor, and to feel good all over, and comfortable. He felt as if he had not an enemy in the world. One day in Farnborough he saw William Fielding on the other side of the street. Susan Merton did not love William, therefore Meadows had no cause to hate him. He remembered William had asked a loan of him and he had declined. He crossed over to him.

"Good-day, Mr. William."

"Good-day, Mr. Meadows."

"You were speaking to me one day about a trifling loan. I could not manage it just then, but now——" Here Meadows paused. He had been on the point of offering the money, but suddenly, by one of those instincts of foresight these able men have, he turned it off thus: "but I know who will. You go to Lawyer Crawley; he lends money to people of credit."

"I know he does; but he won't lend it to me."

"Why not?"

"He does not like us. He is a poor sneaking creature: and my brother George, he caught Crawley selling up some poor fellow or other, and they had words; leastways it went beyond words, I fancy. I don't know the rights of it, but George was a little rough with him by all accounts."

"And what has that to do with this?" said the man of business coolly.

"Why, I am George's brother."

"And if you were George himself, and he saw his way to make a shilling out of you he would do it, wouldn't he? There, you go to Crawley and ask him to lend you one hundred pounds, and he will lend it you, only he will make you pay heavy interest, heavier than I should, you know, if I could manage it myself."

"Oh, I don't care," said simple William; "thank you kindly, Mr. Meadows," and off he went to Crawley.

He found that worthy in his office. Crawley, who instantly guessed his errand, and had no instructions from Meadows, promised himself the satisfaction of refusing the young man. He asked with a cringing manner and a treacherous smile, "What security, sir?"

Poor William higgled and hammered, and offered first one thing, which was blandly declined for this reason; then another, which was blandly declined for that, Crawley drinking deep draughts of mean vengeance all the while from the young man's shame and mortification, when the door opened, a man walked in, and gave Crawley a note and vanished. Crawley opened the note; it contained a cheque drawn by Meadows, and these words: "Lend W. F. the money at ten per cent. on his acceptance of your draft at two months." Crawley put the note and cheque in his pocket.

"Well, sir," said he to William, "you stay here, and I will see if I have got a loose hundred in the bank to spare." He went over to the bank, cashed the cheque, drew a bill of exchange at two months' date, deducted the interest and stamp, and William accepted it, and Crawley bowed him out, cringing, smiling, and secretly shooting poisoned arrows out of his venomous eye in the direction of William's heels.

William thanked him warmly.

This loan made him feel happy.

He had paid his brother's debt to the landlord by sacrificing a large portion of his grain at a time the price was low; and now he was so cramped he had much ado to pay his labour when this loan came. The very next day he bought several hogs;—hogs, as George had sarcastically observed, were William Fielding's hobby; he had confidence in that animal. Potatoes and pigs *versus* sheep and turnips was the theory of William Fielding.

Now the good understanding between William and Meadows was not to last long. William, though he was too wise to visit Grassmere Farm much, was mindful of his promise to George, and used to make occasional inquiries after Susan. He heard that Meadows called at the farm twice a week, and he thought it a little odd. He pondered on it, but did not quite go the length of suspecting anything, still less of suspecting Susan. Still, he thought it odd, but he thought it odder when one morket-day old Isaac Levi said to him—

"Do you remember the promise you made to the lion-hearted young man your brother?"

"Do you ask that to affront me?"

"You never visit her; and others are not so neglectful."

"Who?"

"Go this evening and you will see."

"Yes, I will go, and I will soon see if there is anything in it," said William, not stopping even to inquire why the old Jew took all this interest in the affair.

That evening, as Meadows was in the middle of a description of the town of Sydney, Susan started up. "Why, here is William Fielding!" and she ran out and welcomed him in with much cordiality, perhaps with some excess of cordiality.

William came in, and saluted the farmer and Meadows in his dogged way. Meadows was not best pleased, but kept his temper admirably, and leaving Australia, engaged both the farmers in a conversation on home topics. Susan looked disappointed. Meadows was content with that, and the party separated half an hour sooner than usual.

The next market-evening in strolls William; Meadows again plays the same game. This time Susan could hardly restrain her temper. She did not want to hear about the Grassmere acres, and "The Grove," and oxen and hogs, but about something that mattered to George.

But when the next market-evening William arrived before Mr. Meadows, she was downright provoked, and gave him short answers, which raised his suspicions and made him think he had done wisely in coming. This evening Susan excused herself and went to bed early.

She was in Farnborough the next market-day, and William met her and said—

"I'll take a cup of tea with you to-night, Susan, if you are agreeable."

"William," said Susan sharply, "what makes you always come to us on market-day?"

"I don't know. What makes Mr. Meadows come that day?"

"Because he passes our house to go to his own, I suppose; but you live but two miles off; you can come any day that you are minded."

"Should I be welcome, Susan?"

"What do you think, Will? Speak your mind; I don't understand you."

"Seems to me I was not very welcome last time."

"If I thought that, I wouldn't come again," replied Susan, as sharp as a needle. Then instantly repenting a little, she explained, "You are welcome to me, Will, and you know that as well as I do; but I want you to come some other evening, if it is all the same to you."

"Why?"

"Why? because I am dull other evenings, and it would be nice to have a chat with you."

"Would it, Susan?"

"Of course it would; but that evening I have company—and he talks to me of Australia."

"Nothing else?" sneered the unlucky William.

Susan gave him such a look.

"And that interests me more than anything you can say to me—if you won't be offended," snapped Susan.

William bit his lip.

"Well, then, I won't come this evening, eh, Susan?"

"No, don't, that is a good soul."

"Les femmes sont impitoyables pour ceux qu'elles n'aiment pas." This is a harsh saying, and, of course, not pure truth; but there is a deal of truth in it.

William was proud; and the consciousness of his own love for her made him less able to persist, for he knew she might be so ungenerous as to retort if he angered her too far. So he altered the direction of his battery. He planted himself at the gate of Grassmere Farm, and as Meadows got off his horse, requested a few words with him. Meadows ran him over with one lightning glance, and then the whole man was on the defensive. William bluntly opened the affair.

"You heard me promise to look on Susan as my sister, and keep her as she is for my brother that is far away."

"I heard you, Mr. William," said Meadows, with a smile

that provoked William, as the artful one intended it should.

"You come here too often, sir."

"Too often for whom?"

"Too often for me, too often for George, too often for the girl herself. I won't have George's sweetheart talked about."

"You are the first to talk about her; if there's scandal, it is of your making."

"I won't have it—at a word."

Meadows called out, "Miss Merton, will you step here?"

William was astonished at his audacity; he did not know his man.

Susan opened the parlour window. "What is it, Mr. Meadows?"

"Will you step here, if you please?" Susan came. "Here is a young man tells me I must not call on your father or you."

"I say you must not do it often enough to make her talked of."

"Who dares to talk of me?" cried Susan, scarlet.

"Nobody, Miss Merton. Nobody but the young man himself; and so I told him. Is your father within? Then I'll step in and speak with him anyway." And the sly Meadows vanished to give Susan an opportunity of quarrelling with William while she was hot.

"I don't know how you came to take such liberties with me," began Susan, quite pale now with anger.

"It is for George's sake," said William doggedly.

"Did George bid you insult my friends and me? I would not put up with it from George himself, much less from you. I shall write to George, and ask him whether he wishes me to be your slave."

"Don't ye do so. Don't set my brother against me," remonstrated William ruefully.

"The best thing you can do is to go home and mind your farm, and get a sweetheart for yourself, and then you won't trouble your head about me more than you have any business to do."

This last cut wounded William to the quick.

"Good-evening, Susan."

"Good-evening."

"Won't you shake hands?"

"It would serve you right if I said, No! But I won't

make you of so much importance as you want to be. There! And come again as soon as ever you can treat my friends with respect."

"I shan't trouble you again for a while," said William sadly. "Good-bye. God bless you, Susan dear."

When he was gone the tears came into Susan's eyes, but she was bitterly indignant with him for making a scene about her, which a really modest girl hates. On her reaching the parlour, Mr. Meadows was gone too, and that incensed her still more against William. "Mr. Meadows is affronted, no doubt," said she, "and of course he would not come here to be talked of; he would not like that any more than I. A man that comes here to us out of pure good nature and nothing else."

The next market-day the deep Meadows did not come; Susan missed him and his talk; she had few pleasvres, and this was one of them; but the next after he came as usual, and Susan did not conceal her satisfaction. She was too shy and he too wise to allude to William's interference. They both ignored the poor fellow and his honest, clumsy attempt.

William, discomfited but not convinced, determined to keep his eye upon them both. "I swore it, and I'll do it," said this honest fellow. "But I can't face her tongue; it goes through me like a pitchfork; but as for him"—and he clenched his fist most significantly; then he revolved one or two plans in his head, and rejected them each in turn. At last, a thought struck him—"Mr. Levi! he 'twas that put me on my guard. I'll tell him." Accordingly, he recounted the whole affair and his failure to Mr. Levi. The old man smiled. "You are no match for either of these. You have given the maiden offence, just offence."

"Just offence! Mr. Levi. Now don't ye say so: why, how?"

"By your unskilfulness, my son."

"It is all very well for you to say that, sir, but I can tell you women are kittle folk—manage them who can. I don't know what to do, I'm sure."

"Stay at home and till the land," replied Isaac somewhat drily. "I will go to Grassmere Farm."

CHAPTER IX.

"You are going to leave us, Mr. Eden, and going to live in a jail. Oh! Mr. Eden, I can't bear to think of it. You to be cooped up there among thieves and rogues, and perhaps murderers."

"They have the more need of me."

"And you, who love the air of heaven so; why, sir, I see you take off your very hat at times to enjoy it as you are walking along; you would be choked in a prison. Besides, sir, it is only little parsons that go there."

"What are little parsons?"

"Those that are not clever enough or good enough to be bishops and vicars, and so forth; not such ones as you."

"How odd! This is exactly what the devil whispered in my ear when the question was first raised, but I did not expect to find you on his side."

"Didn't you, sir? Ah! well, if it is your duty, I know I may as well hold my tongue. And then, such as you are not like other folk; you come like sunshine to some dark place, and when you have warmed it and lighted it a bit, Heaven, that sent you, will have you go and shine elsewhere. You came here, sir, you waked up the impenitent folk in this village, and comforted the distressed, and relieved the poor, and you have saved one poor broken-hearted girl from despair, from madness belike; and now we are not to be selfish, we must not hold you back, but let you run the race that is set before you, and remember your words and your deeds, and your dear face and voice to the last hour of our lives."

"And give me the benefit of your prayers, little sister; do not deny me them; your prayers that I may persevere to the end. Ay! it is too true, Susan; in this world there is nothing but meeting and parting; it is sad. We have need to be stout-hearted—stouter-hearted than you are. But it will not always be so: a few short years and we who have fought the good fight shall meet to part no more—to part no more—to part no more!"

As he repeated these words half mechanically, Susan could see that he had suddenly become scarce conscious of her presence: the light of other days was in his eye, and his

lips moved inarticulately. Delicate-minded Susan left him, and with the aid of the servant brought out the tea-things, and set the little table on the grass square in her garden where you could see the western sun. And then she came for Mr. Eden.

"Come, sir, there is not a breath of wind this evening, so the tea-things are set in the air. I know you like that."

The little party sat down in the open air. The butter, churned by Susan, was solidified cream. The bread not very white, but home-made, juicy, and sweet as milk. The tea seemed to diffuse a more flowery fragrance out of doors than it does in, and to mix fraternally with the hundred odours of Susan's flowers that now perfumed the air, and the whole innocent meal, unlike coarse dinner or supper, mingled harmoniously with the scene, with the balmy air, the blue sky, and the bright emerald grass sprinkled with gold by the descending sun. Farmer Merton soon left them, and then Susan went in and brought out pen and ink, and a large sheet of paper.

Susan sat apart working with her needle. Mr. Eden sketched a sermon and sipped his tea, and now and then purred three words to Susan, who purred as many in reply. And yet over this pleasant scene there hung a gentle sadness, felt most by Susan, as with head bent down she plied her needle in silence. "He will not sit in my garden many times more, nor write many more notes of sermons under my eye, nor preach to us all many more sermons; and then he is going to a nasty jail, where he won't have his health, I'm doubtful. And then I'm fearful he won't be comfortable in his house, with nobody to take care of him that really cares for him; servants soon find out where there is no woman to scold them as should be, and he is not the man to take his own part against them." And Susan sighed at the domestic prospects of her friend, and her needle went slower and slower.

These reflections were interrupted by the servant, who announced a visitor. Susan laid down her work and went into the parlour, and there found Isaac Levi. She greeted him with open arms and heightened colour, and never for a moment suspected that he was come there full of suspicions of her.

After the first greeting, a few things of little importance were said on either side. Isaac, watching to see whether Mr. Meadows had succeeded in supplanting George, and too

cunning to lead the conversation that way himself, lay patiently in wait like a sly old fox. However, he soon found he was playing the politician superfluously, for Susan laid bare her whole heart to the simplest capacity. Instead of waiting for the skilful, subtle, almost invisible cross-examination, which the descendant of Maimonides was preparing for her, she answered all his questions before they were asked. It came out that her thought by day and night was George, that she had been very dull, and very unhappy. "But I am better now, Mr. Levi, thank God: He has been very good to me. He has sent me a friend, a clergyman, or an angel in the dress of one, I sometimes think. He knows all about me and George, sir; so that makes me feel quite at home with him, and I can—and now Mr. Meadows stops an hour on market-days, and he is so kind as to tell me all about Australia, and you may guess I like to hear about—Mr. Levi, come and see us some market-evening. Mr. Meadows is capital company; to hear him you would think he had passed half his life in Australia. Were you ever in Australia, sir, if you please?"

"Never, but I shall."

"Shall you, sir?'

"Yes; the old Jew is not to die till he has drifted to every part in the globe. In my old days I shall go back towards the East, and there methinks I shall lay these wandering bones."

"Oh, sir, inquire after George and show him some kindness, and don't see him wronged—he is very simple. No! no! no! you are too old; you must not cross the seas at your age; don't think of it; stay quiet at home till you leave us for a better world."

"At home!" said the old man sorrowfully; "I have no home. I had a home, but the man Meadows has driven me out of it."

"Mr. Meadows! La, sir, as how?"

"He bought the house I live in, and next Ladyday, as the woman worshipper calls it, he turns me to the door."

"But he won't if you ask him. He is a very good-natured man. You go and ask him to be so good as let you stay; he won't gainsay you, you take my word."

"Susanna!" replied Isaac, "you are good and innocent; you cannot fathom the hearts of the wicked. This Meadows is a man of Belial. I did beseech him; I bowed these gray hairs to him, to let me stay in the house where I lived so

happily with my Leah twenty years, where my children were born to me and died from me, where my Leah consoled me for their loss awhile, but took no comfort herself and left me too."

"Poor old man! and what did he say?"

"He refused me with harsh words. To make the refusal more bitter, he insulted my religion and my much-enduring tribe, and at the day appointed he turns me at threescore years and ten adrift upon the earth."

"Eh! dear! how hard the world is!" cried Susan; "I had a great respect for Mr. Meadows, but now if he comes here I know I shall shut the door in his face."

Isaac reflected. This would not have suited a certain subtle Eastern plan of vengeance he had formed. "No!" said he, "that is folly. Take not another man's quarrel on your shoulders. A Jew knows how to revenge himself without your aid."

So then her inquisitor was satisfied; Australia really was the topic that made Meadows welcome. He departed, revolving Oriental vengeance.

Smooth Meadows at his next visit removed the impression excited against him, and easily persuaded Susan that Levi was more in the wrong than he; in which opinion she stood firm till Levi's next visit.

At last she gave up all hope of dijudicating, and determined to end the matter by bringing them together and making them friends.

And now approached the day of Mr. Eden's departure. The last sermon—the last quiet tea in the garden. On Monday afternoon he was to go to Oxford, and the following week to his new sphere of duties, which he had selected to the astonishment of some hundred persons who knew him superficially—knew him by his face, by his pretensions as a scholar, a divine, and a gentleman of descent and independent means, but had not sounded his depths.

All Sunday Susan sought every opportunity of conversing with him even on indifferent matters. She was garnering up his words, his very syllables, and twenty times in the day he saw her eyes fill with tears apropos of such observations as this——

"We shall have a nice warm afternoon, Susan."

"It is to be hoped so, sir; the blackbirds are giving a chirrup or two."

All Monday forenoon Susan was very busy. There was

bread to be baked and butter to be made. Mr. Eden must take some of each to Oxford. They would keep Grassmere in his mind a day or two longer: and besides they were wholesome and he was fond of them. Then there was his linen to be looked over, and buttons sewed on for the last time. Then he must eat a good dinner before he went, so then he would want nothing but his tea when he got to Oxford; and the bread would be fit to eat by tea-time, especially a small crusty cake she had made for that purpose. So with all this Susan was energetic, almost lively; and even when it was all done and they were at dinner, her principal anxiety seemed to be that he should eat more than usual because he was going a journey. But when all bustle of every kind was over, and the actual hour of parting came, she suddenly burst out crying before her father and the servant, who bade her not take on, and instantly burst out crying too from vague sympathy.

The old farmer ordered the girl out of the room directly, and without the least emotion proceeded to make excuses to Mr. Eden for Susan.

"A young maid's eyes soon flow over," etc.

Mr. Eden interrupted him.

"Such tears as these do not scald the heart. I feel this separation from my dear kind friend as much as she feels it. But I am more than twice her age, and have passed through—I should feel it bitterly if I thought our friendship and Christian love were to end because our path of duty lies separate. But no, Susan, still look on me as your adviser, your elder brother, and in some measure your pastor. I shall write to you and watch over you, though at some distance—and not so great a distance. I am always well horsed, and I know you will give me a bed at Grassmere once a quarter."

"That we will," cried the farmer warmly, "and proud and happy to see you cross the threshold, sir."

"And Mr. Merton, my new house is large. I shall be alone in it. Whenever you and Miss Merton have nothing better to do, pray come and visit me. I will make you as uncomfortable as you have made me comfortable, but as welcome as you have made me welcome."

"We will come, sir! we will come some one of these days, and thank you for the honour."

So Mr. Eden went from Grassmere village and Grassmere farm-house—but he left neither as he found them; fifty

years hence an old man and woman or two will speak to their grandchildren of "the Sower," and Susan Merton (if she is on earth then) of "the Good Physician." She may well do so, for it was no vulgar service he rendered her—no vulgar malady he checked.

Not every good man could have penetrated so quickly a coy woman's grief, nor, the wound found, have soothed her fever and deadened her smart with a hand as firm as gentle, as gentle as firm.

Such men are human suns! They brighten and warm wherever they pass. Fools count them mad, till death wrenches open foolish eyes; they are not often called "my Lord," * nor sung by poets when they die; but the hearts they heal, and their own, are their rich reward on earth, and their place is high in heaven.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Meadows lived in a house that he had conquered three years ago by lending money on it at fair interest, in his own name. Mr. David Hall, the proprietor, paid neither principal nor interest. Mr. Meadows expected this contingency, and therefore lent his money. He threatened to foreclose, and sell the house under the hammer; to avoid this Mr. Hall said, "Pay yourself the interest by living rent-free in the house till such time as my old aunt dies, drat her, and then I'll pay your money. I wish I had never borrowed it." Meadows acquiesced with feigned reluctance. "Well, if I must, I must; but let me have my money as soon as you can"—(aside) "I will end my days in this house."

It had many conveniences; among the rest, a very long though narrow garden inclosed within high walls; at the end of the garden was a door, which anybody could open from the inside, but from the outside only by a Bramah key.

The access to this part of the premises was by a short, narrow lane, very dirty, and very little used, because, whatever might have been in old times, it led now from nowhere to nowhere. Meadows received by this entrance one or two persons whom he never allowed to desecrate his knocker. At the head of these furtive visitors was Peter Crawley,

* Sometimes though.

attorney-at-law, a gentleman who every New-year's Eve used to say to himself with a look of gratified amazement, "Another year gone, and I not struck off the rolls!!!"

Peter had a Bramah key intrusted to him.

His visits to Mr. Meadows were conducted thus: he opened the garden-gate, and looked up at the window in a certain passage. This passage was not accessible to the servants, and the window with its blinds was a signal-book.

Blinds up, Mr. Meadows out.

White blind down, Mr. Meadows in.

Blue blind down, Mr. Meadows in, but not alone.

The same key that opened the garden-door opened a door at the back of the house which led direct to the passage above mentioned. On the window-seat lay a peculiar whistle constructed to imitate the whining of a dog. Then Meadows would go to his book-shelves, which lined one side of the room, and pressing a hidden spring, open a door that nobody ever suspected, for the books came along with it. To provide for every contingency, there was a small secret opening in another part of the shelves, by which Meadows could shoot unobserved a note or the like into the passage, and so give Crawley instructions without dismissing a visitor, if he had one.

Meadows provided against surprise and discovery. His study had double doors; neither of them could be opened from the outside. His visitors or servants must rap with an iron knocker; and whilst Meadows went to open, the secret visitor stepped into the passage, and shut the books behind him.

It was a room that looked business. One side was almost papered with ordnance maps of this and an adjoining county. Pigeon-holes abounded too, and there was a desk six feet long, choke-full of little drawers—contents indicated outside in letters of which the proprietor knew the meaning, not I.

Between the door and the fireplace was a screen, on which, in place of idle pictures, might be seen his plans and calculations as a land-surveyor, especially those that happened to be at present in operation or under consideration. So he kept his business before his eye, on the chance of a good idea striking him at a leisure moment.

"Will Fielding's acceptance falls due to-morrow, Crawley."

"Yes, sir, what shall I do?"

"Present it; he is not ready for it, I know."

"Well, sir, what next?"

"Serve him with a writ."

"He will be preciously put about."

"He will. Seem sorry; say you are a little short, but won't trouble him for a month, if it is inconvenient; but he must make you safe by signing a judgment."

"Ay! ay! sir. May I make bold to ask what is the game with this young Fielding?"

"You ought to know the game—to get him in my power."

"And a very good game it is, sir! Nobody plays it better than you. He won't be the only one that is in your power in these parts—he! he!" And Crawley chuckled without merriment. "Excuse my curiosity, sir, but when about is the blow to fall?"

"What is that to you?"

"Nothing, sir, only the sooner the better. I have a grudge against the family."

"Have you? then don't act upon it. I don't employ you to do your business, but mine."

"Certainly, Mr. Meadows. You don't think I'd be so ungrateful as to spoil your admirable plans by acting upon any little feeling of my own."

"I don't think you would be so silly. For if you did, we should part."

"Don't mention such an event, sir."

"You have been drinking, Crawley!"

"Not a drop, sir, this two days."

"You are a liar! The smell of it comes through your skin. I won't have it. Do you hear what I say? I won't have it. No man that drinks can do business—especially mine."

"I'll never touch a drop again. They called me into the public-house—they wouldn't take a denial."

"Hold your prate and listen to me. The next time you look at a public-house, say to yourself, Peter Crawley, that is not a public-house to you—it is an hospital, a workhouse, or a dunghill—for if you go in there, John Meadows, that is your friend, will be your enemy."

"Heaven forbid, Mr. Meadows."

"Drink this basinful of coffee."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. It is very bitter."

"Is your head clear now?"

"As a bell."

"Then go and do my work, and don't do an atom more or an atom less than your task."

"No, sir. Oh, Mr. Meadows! it is a pleasure to serve you. You are as deep as the sea, sir, and as firm as the rock. You never drink, nor anything else, that I can find. A man out of a thousand! No little weakness, like the rest of us, sir. You are a great man, sir. You are a model of a man of bus——"

"Good-morning," growled Meadows roughly, and turned his back.

"Good-morning, sir," said Peter mellifluously. And opening the back-door about ten inches, he wriggled out like a weasel going through a chink in a wall.

William Fielding fell like a child into the trap. "Give me time, and it will be all right," is the debtor's delusion. William thanked Crawley for not pressing him, and so compelling him to force a sale of all his hogs, fat or lean. Crawley received his thanks with a leer, returned in four days, got the judgment signed, and wriggled away with it to Meadows' back-door.

"You take out an arrest"—Meadows gave him a pocket-book—"put it in this, and keep it ready in your pocket night and day."

"I daresay it will come into use before the year is out, sir."

"I hope not."

George Fielding gone to Australia to make a thousand pounds by farming and cattle-feeding, that so he may claim old Merton's promised consent to marry Susan: Susan observing Mr. Eden's precepts even more religiously than when he was with her; active, full of charitable deeds, often pensive, always anxious, but not despondent now, thanks to the good physician: Meadows falling deeper and deeper in love, but keeping it more jealously secret than ever; on his guard against Isaac, on his guard against William, on his guard against John Meadows; hoping everything from time and accidents, from the distance between the lovers, from George's incapacity, of which he had a great opinion — "He will never make a thousand pence"—but not trusting to the things he hoped: on the contrary, watching with keen eye, and working with subtle threads to draw everybody into his power who could assist or thwart him in the object his

deep heart and iron will were set on: William Fielding going down the hill Meadows was mounting; getting the better of his passion, and substituting, by degrees, a brother-in-law's regard.

Flowers and weeds have one thing in common—while they live they grow. Natural growth is a slow process, to describe it day by day a slower. For the next four months matters glided so quietly on the slopes I have just indicated, that an intelligent calculation by the reader may very well take the place of a tedious chronicle by the writer. Moreover, the same monotony did not hang over every part of our story. These very four months were eventful enough to one of our characters, and through him, by subtle and positive links, to every man and every woman who fills any considerable position in this matter-of-fact romance. Therefore our story drags us from the meadows round Grassmere to a massive castellated building, glaring red brick with white stone corners. These colours and their contrast relieve the stately mass of some of that grimness which characterises the castles of antiquity; but enough remains to strike some awe into the beholder.

Two round towers flank the principal entrance. On one side of the right-hand tower is a small house constructed in the same style as the grand pile. The castle is massive and grand: this, its satellite, is massive and tiny, like the frog doing his little bit of bull—like Signor Hervio Nano, a tremendous thick dwarf now no more. There is one dimple to all this gloomy grandeur: a rich little flower-garden, whose frame of emerald turf goes smiling up to the very ankle of the frowning fortress, as some few happy lakes in the world wash the very foot of the mountains that hem them. From this green spot a few flowers look up with bright and wondering wide-opened eyes at the great bully masonry over their heads; and to the spectator of both, these sparks of colour at the castle-foot are dazzling and charming; they are like rubies, sapphires, and pink topaz, in some uncouth angular ancient setting.

Between the central towers is a sharp arch, filled by a huge oak door of the same shape and size, which, for further security or ornament, is closely studded with large diamond-headed nails. A man with keys at his girdle, like the ancient housewives, opens the huge door to you with

slight effort, so well oiled is it. You slip under a porch into an inclosed yard, the great door shuts almost of itself, and now depends upon the housewifely man whether you ever see the vain, idle, and every-way-objectionable world again.

Passing into the interior of the vast building, you find yourself in an extensive aisle, traversed at right angles by another of similar dimensions, the whole in form of a cross. In the centre of each aisle is an iron staircase, so narrow that two people cannot pass, and so light and open that it merely ornaments, not obstructs, the view of the aisle. These staircases make two springs; the first takes them to the level of two corridors on the first floor. Here there is a horizontal space of about a yard, whence the continuation staircase rises to the second and highest floor. This gives three corridors, all studded with doors opening on small separate apartments, whereof anon.

Nearly all the inmates of this grim palace wear a peculiar costume and disguise, one feature of which is a cap of coarse materials, with a vizor to it, which conceals the features all but the chin and the eyes, which last peep, in a very droll way, through two holes cut for that purpose.

They are distinguished by a courteous manner to strangers, whom they never fail to salute in passing, with great apparent cordiality; indeed, we fear we shall never meet in the busy world with such uniform urbanity as in this and similar retreats. It arises from two causes: one is that here strangers are welcomed for their rarity; another that politeness is a part of the education of the place, which, besides its other uses, is an adult school of manners, morals, religion, grammar, writing, and cobbling.

With the exception of its halls and corridors, the building is almost entirely divided into an immense number of the small apartments noticed above. These are homely inside, but exquisitely clean. The furniture, movable and fixed, none of which is superfluous, can be briefly described: A bedstead, consisting of the side walls of the apartment; polished steel staples are fixed in these walls, two on each side the apartment at an elevation of about two feet and a half. The occupant's mattress (made of cocoa bark) has two stout steel hooks at each end; these are hooked into the staples, and so he lies across his abode. A deal table the size of a pocket-handkerchief; also a deal tripod. A waterspout so ingeniously contrived, that, turned to the

right, it sends a small stream into a copper basin, and to the left, into a bottomless close stool at some distance. A small gas-pipe tipped with polished brass. In one angle of the wall a sort of commode, or open cupboard, on whose shelves a bright pewter plate, a knife and fork, and a wooden spoon : in a drawer of this commode, yellow soap, and a comb and brush. A grating down low for hot air to come in, if it likes, and another up high for foul air to go out, if it chooses. On the wall a large placard containing rules for the tenant's direction, and smaller placards containing texts from Scripture, the propriety of returning thanks after food, etc. ; a slate, and a couple of leathern knee-guards used in polishing the room. And that is all. But the deal furniture is so clean you might eat off it. The walls are snow, the copper basin and the brass gas-pipe glitter like red gold and pale gold, and the bed-hooks like silver hot from the furnace. Altogether it is inviting at first sight.

To one of these snowy snug retreats was now ushered an acquaintance of ours, Tom Robinson. A brief retrospect must dispose of his intermediate history.

When he left us he went to the county bridewell, where he remained until the assizes, an interval of about a month. He was tried ; direct evidence was strong against him, and he defended himself with so much ingenuity and sleight of intellect, that the jury could not doubt his sleight of hand and morals too. He was found guilty, identified as a notorious thief, and condemned to twelve months' imprisonment and ten years' transportation. He returned to the county bridewell for a few days, and then was shifted to the castellated building.

Tom Robinson had not been in jail this four years, and, since his last visit, great changes had begun to take place in the internal economy of these skeleton palaces, and in the treatment of their prisoners.

Prisons might be said to be in a transition state. In some, as in the county bridewell Robinson had just left, the old system prevailed in full force. The two systems vary in their aims. Under the old, jail was a finishing school of felony and petty larceny. Under the new, it is intended to be a penal hospital for diseased and contagious souls.

The treatment of prisoners is not at present invariable. Within certain limits, the law unwisely allows a

discretionary power to the magistrates of the county where the jail is; and the jailer, or, as he is now called, the governor, is their agent in these particulars.

Hence, in some new jails you may now see the non-separate system; in others, the separate system without silence; in others, the separate and silent system; in others, a mixture of these—*i.e.*, the hardened offenders kept separate, the improving ones allowed to mix; and these varieties are at the discretion of the magistrates, who settle within the legal limits each jail's system.

The magistrates, in this part of their business, are represented by certain of their own body, who are called "the visiting justices"; and these visiting justices can even order and authorise a jailer to flog a prisoner for offences committed in jail.

Now, a year or two before our tale, one Captain O'Connor, was governor of this jail. Captain O'Connor was a man of great public merit. He had been one of the first dissatisfied with the old system, and had written very intelligent books on crime and punishment, which are supposed to have done their share in opening the nation's eyes to the necessity of regenerating its prisons. But after a while the visiting justices of this particular county became dissatisfied with him; he did not go far enough nor fast enough with the stone he had helped to roll. Books and reports came out which convinced the magistrates that severe punishment of mind and body was the essential object of a jail, and that it was wrong and chimerical to attempt any cures by any other means.

Captain O'Connor had been very successful by other means, and could not quite come to this opinion; but he had a deputy-governor who did. System, when it takes a hold of the mind, takes a strong hold, and the men of system became very impatient of opposition, and grateful for thorough acquiescence.

Hence it came to pass, that in the course of a few months, Captain O'Connor found himself in an uncomfortable position. His deputy-governor, Mr. Hawes, enjoyed the confidence of the visiting justices; he did not. His suggestions were negatived; Hawes's accepted. And to tell the truth, he became at last useless as well as uncomfortable, for these gentlemen were determined to carry out their system, and had a willing agent in the prison. O'Connor was little more than a drag on the

wheel he could not hinder from gliding down the hill. At last, it happened that he had overdrawn his account, without clearly stating at the time that the sum, which amounted nearly to one hundred pounds, was taken by him as an accommodation, or advance of salary. This, which though by no means unprecedented, was an unbusiness-like, though innocent omission, justified censure.

The magistrates went further than censure; they had long been looking for an excuse to get rid of him, and avail themselves of the zeal and energy of Hawes. They therefore removed O'Connor, stating publicly as their reason that he was old, and their interest put Hawes into his place. There was something melancholy in such a close to O'Connor's public career. Fortune used him hardly. He had been one of the first to improve prisons, yet he was dismissed on this or that pretence, but really because he could not keep pace with the *soidisant* improvements of three inexperienced persons. Honourable mention of his name, his doings, and his words, is scattered about various respectable works by respectable men on this subject, yet he ended in something very like discredit.

However, the public gained this by the injustice done him—that an important experiment was tried under an active and willing agent.

With Governor Hawes the separate and silent system flourished in —— Jail.

The justices and the new governor were of one mind. They had been working together about two years when Robinson came into the jail.

During this period three justices had periodically visited the jail, perused the reports, examined, as in duty bound, the surgeon, the officers, and prisoners, and were proud of the system and its practical working here.

With respect to Hawes the governor, their opinion of him was best shown in the reports they had to make to the Home Office from time to time. In these they invariably spoke of him as an active, zealous, and deserving officer.

Robinson had heard much of the changes in jail treatment, but they had not yet come home to him; when, therefore, instead of being turned adrift among seventy other spirits as bad as himself, and greeted with their boisterous acclamations, and the friendly pressure of seven or eight felonious hands, he was ushered into a cell white

as driven snow, and his housewifely duties explained to him, under a heavy penalty if a speck of dirt should ever be discovered on his little wall, his little floor, his little table, or if his cocoa-bark mattress should not be neatly rolled up after use, and the strap tight, and the steel hook polished like glass, and his little brass gas-pipe glittering like gold, etc. Thomas looked blank and had a misgiving.

"I say, gov'nor," said he to the under turnkey, "how long am I to be here before I go into the yard?"

"Talking not allowed out of hours," was the only reply.

Robinson whistled. The turnkey, whose name was Evans, looked at him with a doubtful air, as much as to say, "Shall I let that pass unpunished or not?" However, he went out without any further observation, leaving the door open: but the next moment he returned and put his head in: "Prisoners shut their own doors," said he.

"Well," drawled Robinson, looking coolly and insolently into the man's face, "I don't see what I shall gain by that." And Mr. Robinson seated himself, and turning his back a little rudely, immersed himself ostentatiously in his own thoughts.

"You will gain as you won't be put in the black-hole for refractory conduct, No. 19," replied Evans, quietly and sternly.

Robinson made a wry face, and pushed the door peevishly: it shut with a spring, and no mortal power or ingenuity could now open it from the inside.

"Well, I'm blest," said the self-immured, "every man his own turnkey now; save the Queen's pocket, whatever you do. Times are so hard. Box at the opera costs no end. What have we got here? A Bible! my eyes! invisible print! Oh, I see; 'tisn't for us to read; 'tis for the visitors to admire—like the new sheet over the dirty blankets! What's this hung up?

'Grace after Meat.'

Oh, with all my heart, your reverence! Here, turnkey, fetch up the venison and the sweet sauce—you may leave the water-gruel until I ring for it. If I am to say grace, let me feel it first: dart your eyes all round, governor, turnkeys, chaplain, and all the hypocritical crew!"

The next morning, at half-past five, the prison bell rang for the officers to rise, and at six a turnkey unlocked

Robinson's door, and delivered the following in an imperious key all in one note and without any rests: "Prisoner to open and shake bedding wash face hands and neck on pain of punishment and roll up hammocks and clean cells and be ready to clean corridors if required." So chanting—slammed door—vanished.

Robinson set to work with alacrity upon the little arrangements; he soon finished them, and then he would not have been sorry to turn out and clean the corridor for a change, but it was not his turn. He sat, dull and lonely, till eight o'clock, when suddenly a key was inserted into a small lock in the centre of his door, but outside; the effect of this was to open a small trap in the door, through this aperture a turnkey shoved in the man's breakfast, without a word, "like one flinging guts to a bear" (Scott); and on the sociable Tom attempting to say a civil word to him, drew the trap sharply back, and hermetically sealed the aperture with a snap. The breakfast was in a round tin, with two compartments; one pint of gruel and six ounces of bread. These two phases of farina were familiar to Mr. Robinson. He ate the bread and drank the gruel, adding a good deal of salt.

At nine the chapel bell rang. Robinson was glad; not that he admired the Liturgy, but he said to himself, "Now I shall see a face or two, perhaps some old pals."

To his dismay, the warder who opened his cell bade him at the same time put on the prison cap, with the peak down; and when he and the other male prisoners were mustered in the corridor, he found them all like himself, vizor down, eyes glittering like basilisks' or cats' through two holes, features undistinguishable. The word was given to march in perfect silence, five paces apart, to the chapel.

The sullen pageant started.

"I've heard of this, but who'd have thought they carried the game so far. Well, I must wait till we are in chapel, and pick up a pal by the voice, whilst the parson is doing his patter."

On reaching the chapel, he found to his dismay that the chapel was as cellular as any other part of the prison; it was an agglomeration of one hundred sentry-boxes, open only on the side facing the clergyman, and even there only from the prisoner's third button upwards. Warders stood on raised platforms, and pointed out his sentry-box to each prisoner with very long slender wands; the prisoner went

into it and pulled the door (it shut with a spring), and next took his badge or number from his neck, and hung it up on a nail above his head in the sentry-box. Between the reading-desk and the male prisoners was a small area where the debtors sat together.

The female prisoners were behind a thick veil of close lattice-work.

Service concluded, the governor began to turn a wheel in his pew: this wheel exhibited to the congregation a number, the convict whose number corresponded instantly took down his badge (the sight and position of which had determined the governor in working his wheel), drew the peak of his cap over his face and went out and waited in the lobby. When all the sentry-boxes were thus emptied, dead march of the whole party back to the main building; here the warders separated them, and sent them dead silent, vizors down, some to clean the prison, some to their cells, some to hard labour, and some to an airing in the yard.

Robinson was to be aired. "Hurrah!" thought sociable Tom. Alas! he found the system in the yard as well as in the chapel. The promenade was a number of passages radiating from a common centre; the sides of the passage were thick walls; entrance to passage an iron gate locked behind the promenader. An officer remained on the watch the whole time to see that a word did not creep out or in through one of the gates.

"And this they call out of doors," grunted Robinson.

After an hour's promenade he was taken into his cell, where, at twelve, the trap in his door was opened and his dinner shoved in, and the trap snapped-to again all in three seconds. A very good dinner, better than paupers always get — three ounces of meat (no bone), eight ounces of potatoes, and eight ounces of bread. After dinner, three weary hours without an incident. At about three o'clock one of the warders opened his cell door, and put his head in and swiftly withdrew it. Three more monotonous hours, and then supper—one pint of gruel, and eight ounces of bread. He ate it as slowly as he could, to eke out a few minutes in the heavy day. Quarter before eight a bell to go to bed. At eight the warders came round, and saw that the prisoners were all in bed. The next day the same thing, and the next ditto, with this exception, that one of the warders came into his cell and minutely examined it in dead silence. The fourth day the chaplain visited him,

asked him a few questions, repeated a few sentences on the moral responsibility of every human being, and set him some texts of Scripture to learn by heart. This visit, though merely one of routine, broke the thief's dead silence and solitude, and he would have been thankful to have a visit every day from the chaplain, whose manner was formal, but not surly and forbidding like the turnkeys or warders.

Next day the governor of the jail came suddenly into the cell, and put to Robinson several questions, which he answered with great affability; then, turning on his heel, said brusquely, "Have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Out with it then, my man," said the governor impatiently.

"Sir, I was condemned to hard labour; now I wanted to ask you when my hard labour is to begin, because I have not been put upon anything yet."

"We are kinder to you than the judges, then, it seems."

"Yes, sir; but I am not naturally lazy, and——"

"A little hard work would amuse you just now?"

"Indeed, sir, I think it would; I am very much depressed in spirits."

"You will be worse before you are better."

"Heaven forbid! I think if you don't give me something to do I shall go out of my mind soon, sir."

"That is what they all say. You will be put on hard labour, I promise you, but not when it suits you. We'll choose the time." And the governor went out with a knowing smile upon his face.

The thief sat himself down disconsolately, and the heavy hours, like leaden waves, seemed to rise and rise, and roll over his head and suffocate him, and weigh him down, down, down to bottomless despair.

At length, about the tenth day, this human being's desire to exchange a friendly word with some other human creature became so strong, that in the chapel, during service, he scratched the door of his sentry-box, and whispered, "Mate, whisper me a word, for pity's sake." He received no answer; but even to have spoken himself relieved his swelling soul for a minute or two. Half an hour later four turnkeys came into his cell, and took him downstairs, and confined him in a pitch-dark dungeon.

The prisoner whose attention he had tried to attract in

chapel had told to curry favour, and was reported favourably for the same.

The darkness in which Robinson now lay was not like the darkness of our bedrooms at night, in which the outlines of objects are more or less visible; it was the frightful darkness that chilled and crushed the Egyptians, soul and body—it was a darkness that might be felt.

This terrible and unnatural privation of all light is very trying to all God's creatures, to none more so than to man, and amongst men it is most dangerous and distressing to those who have imagination and excitability. Now Robinson was a man of this class, a man of rare capacity, full of talent and the courage and energy that vent themselves in action, but not rich in the tough fortitude which does little, feels little, and bears much.

When they took him out of the black-hole, after six hours' confinement, he was observed to be white as a sheet, and to tremble violently all over, and in this state, at the word of command, he crept back all the way to his cell, his hand to his eyes, that were dazzled by what seemed to him bright daylight, his body shaking, while every now and then a loud convulsive sob burst from his bosom.

The governor happened to be on the corridor, looking down over the rails, as Robinson passed him. He said to him, with a victorious sneer, "You won't be refractory in chapel again in a hurry."

"No," said the thief, in a low, gentle voice, despairingly.

The day after Robinson was put in the black-hole the surgeon came his rounds: he found him in a corner of his cell with his eyes fixed on the floor.

The man took no notice of his entrance. The surgeon went up to him, and shook him rather roughly. Robinson raised his heavy eyes, and looked stupidly at him.

The urgeon laid hold of him, and placing a thumb on each side of his eye, inspected that organ fully. He then felt his pulse; this done, he went out with the warder. Making his report to the governor, he came in turn to Robinson.

"No. 19 is sinking."

"Oh, is he?—Fry" (turning to a warder), "what has 19's treatment been?"

"Been in his cell, sir, without labour since he came. Black-hole yesterday, for communicating in chapel."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Doctor says he is sinking."

"What the devil do you mean by his sinking?"

"Well, sir," replied the surgeon, with a sort of dry deference, "he is dying—that is what I mean."

"Oh, he is dying, is he; d—n him, we'll stop that! Here, Fry, take No. 19 out into the garden, and set him to work, and put him on the corridors to-morrow."

"Is he to be let talk to us, sir?"

"Humph! yes!"

Robinson was taken out into the garden; it was a small piece of ground that had once been a yard; it was inclosed within walls of great height, and to us would have seemed a cheerless place for horticulture, but to Robinson it appeared the garden of Eden: he gave a sigh of relief and pleasure, but the next moment his countenance fell.

"They won't let me stay here!"

Fry took him into the centre of the garden, and put a spade into his hand. "Now you dig this piece," said he, in his dry, unfriendly tone, "and if you have time cut the edges of this grass path square." The words were scarcely out of his mouth, before Robinson drove the spade into the soil with all the energy of one of God's creatures escaping from system back to nature.

Fry left him in the garden after making him pull down his vizor, for there was one more prisoner working at some distance.

Robinson set to with energy, and dug for the bare life. It was a sort of work he knew very little about, and a gardener would have been disgusted at his ridges, but he threw his whole soul into it, and very soon had nearly completed his task. Having been confined so long without exercise, his breath was short, and he perspired profusely; but he did not care for that. "Oh, how sweet this is after being buried alive!" cried he, and in went the spade again. Presently he was seized with a strong desire to try the other part of his task, the more so as it required more skill, and presented a difficulty to overcome. A part of the path had been shaved, and the nippers lay where they had been last used. Robinson inspected the recent work with an intelligent eye, and soon discovered traces of a white line on one side of the path, that served as a guide to the nippers. "Oh, I must draw a straight line," said Robinson, out loud, indulging himself with the sound of a human voice: "but how? can you tell me that?" he inquired of a

gooseberry-bush that grew near. The words were hardly out of his mouth before, peering about in every direction, he discovered an iron spike with some cord wrapped round it, and, not far off, a piece of chalk. He pounced on them, and fastening the spike at the edge of the path, attempted to draw a line with the chalk, using the string as a ruler. Not succeeding, he reflected a little, and the result was that he chalked several feet of the line all round until it was all white; then with the help of a stake, which he took for his other terminus, he got the chalked string into a straight line just above the edge of the grass; next pressing it tightly down with his foot, he effected a white line on the grass; he now removed the string, took the nippers, and following his white line, trimmed the path *secundum artem*. "There," said Robinson to the gooseberry-bush, but not very loud for fear of being heard and punished, "I wonder whether that is how the gardeners do it? I think it must be." He viewed his work with satisfaction, then went back to his digging, and as he put the finishing stroke, Fry came to bring him back to his cell; it was bed-time.

"I never worked in a garden before," began Robinson "so it is not so well done as it might be, but if I was to come every day for a week I think I could master it. I did not know there was a garden in this prison. If ever I build a prison, there shall be a garden in it as big as Belgrave Square."

"You are precious fond of the sound of your own voice, No. 19," said Fry drily.

"We are not forbidden to speak to the warders, are we?"

"Not at proper times."

He threw open cell-door 19, and Robinson entered.

Before he could close the door Robinson said, "Good-night and thank you."

"G'night," snarled Fry sullenly, as one shamed against his will into a civility.

Robinson lay awake half the night, and awoke the next morning rather feverish and stiff, but not the leaden thing he was the day before.

A feather turns a balanced scale. This man's life and reason had been engaged in a drawn battle with three mortal enemies — solitude, silence, and privation of all employment. That little bit of labour and wholesome thought, whose paltry and childish details I half blush to

have given you, were yet due to my story, for they took a man out of himself, checked the self-devouring process, and helped elastic nature to recover herself this bout.

The next day Robinson was employed washing the prison. The next he got two hours in the garden again, and the next the trades-master was sent into his cell to teach him how to make scrubbing-brushes. The man sat down and was commencing a discourse when Robinson interrupted him politely.

"Sir, let me see you work, and watch me try to do the same, and correct me."

"With all my heart," said the trades-master.

He remained about half an hour with his pupil, and when he went out he said to one of the turnkeys, "There is a chap in there that can pick up a handicraft as a pigeon picks up peas."

The next day the surgeon happened to look in. He found Robinson as busy as a bee making brushes, pulled his eye open again, felt his pulse, and wrote something down in his memorandum-book. He left directions with the turnkey that No. 19 should be kept employed, with the governor's permission.

Robinson's hands were now full; he made brushes, and every day put some of them to the test upon the floor and walls of the building.

It happened one day as he was doing housemaid in Corridor B, that he suddenly heard unwonted sounds issue from a part of the premises into which he had not yet been introduced, the yard devoted to hard labour. First he heard a single voice shouting; that did not last long; then a dead silence; then several voices, among which his quick ear recognised Fry's and the governor's. He could see nothing; the sounds came from one of the hard-labour cells. Robinson was surprised and puzzled; what were these sounds that broke the silence of the living tomb? An instinct told him it was no use asking a turnkey, so he devoured his curiosity and surprise as best he might.

The very next day, about the same hour, both were again excited by noises from the same quarter equally unintelligible. He heard a great noise of water slashed in bucketfuls against a wall, and this was followed by a sort of gurgling that seemed to him to come from a human throat; this latter, however, was almost drowned in an exulting chuckle of several persons, amongst whom he

caught the tones of a turnkey called Hodges, and of the governor himself. Robinson puzzled and puzzled himself, but could not understand these curious sounds, and he could see nothing except a quantity of water running out of one of the labour cells, and coursing along till it escaped by one of the two gutters that drained the yard. Often and often Robinson meditated on this, and exerted all his ingenuity to conceive what it meant. His previous jail experience afforded him no clue, and as he was one of those who hate to be in the dark about anything, this new riddle tortured him.

However, the prison was generally so dead dumb and gloomy, that upon two such cheerful events as water splashing and creatures laughing, he could not help crowing a little out of sympathy without knowing why.

The next day, as Robinson was working in the corridor, the governor came in with a gentleman whom he treated with unusual and marked respect. This gentleman was the chairman of the quarter sessions, and one of those magistrates who had favoured the adoption of the present system.

Mr. Williams inspected the prison; was justly pleased with its exquisite cleanness; he questioned the governor as to the health of the prisoners, and received for answer that most of them were well, but that there were some exceptions; this appeared to satisfy him. He went into the labour-yard, looked at the cranks, examined the numbers printed on each in order to learn their respective weights, and see that the prisoners were not overburdened.

Went with the governor into three or four cells, and asked the prisoners if they had any complaint to make.

The unanimous answer was "No!"

He then complimented the governor, and drove home to his own house, Ashtown Park.

There, after dinner, he said to a brother magistrate, "I inspected the jail to-day—was all over it."

The next morning Fry the morose came into Robinson's cell with a more cheerful countenance than usual. Robinson noticed it.

"You are put on the crank," said Fry.

"Oh, am I?"

"Of course you are. Your sentence was hard labour, wasn't it? I don't know why you weren't sent on a fortnight ago."

Fry then took him out into the labour-yard, which he found perforated with cells about half the size of his hermitage in the corridor. In each of these little quiet grottos lurked a monster called a crank. A crank is a machine of this sort—there springs out of a vertical post an iron handle, which the workman, taking it by both hands, works round and round as in some country places you may have seen the villagers draw a bucket up from a well. The iron handle goes at the shoulder into a small iron box at the top of the post, and inside that box the resistance to the turner is regulated by the manufacturer, who states the value of the resistance outside in cast-iron letters. Thus—

5-lb. crank.

7-lb. crank. 10, 12, etc., etc.

"Eighteen hundred revolutions per hour," said Mr. Fry in his voice of routine, "and you are to work two hours before dinner." So saying, he left him, and Robinson, with the fear of punishment before him, lost not a moment in getting to work. He found the crank go easy enough at first, but the longer he was at it the stiffer it seemed to turn. And after about four hundred turns he was fain to breathe and rest himself. He took three minutes rest, then at it again. All this time there was no taskmaster, as in Egypt, nor whipper-up of declining sable energy, as in Old Kentucky. So that if I am so fortunate as to have a reader aged ten, he is wondering why the fool did not confine his exertions to *saying* he had made the turns. My dear, it would not do. Though no mortal oversaw the thief at his task, the eye of science was in that cell and watched every stroke, and her inexorable finger marked it down. In plain English, on the face of the machine was a thing like a chronometer with numbers set all round, and a hand which, somehow or other, always pointed to the exact number of turns the thief had made. The crank was an autometer, or self-measurer, and in that respect your superior and mine, my little drake.

This was Robinson's first acquaintance with the crank. The tread-wheel had been the mode in his time; so by the time he had made three thousand turns he was rather exhausted. He leaned upon the iron handle, and sadly regretted his garden and his brushes; but fear and dire necessity were upon him; he set to his task and to work again. "I won't look at the meter again, for it always

tells me less than I expect. I'll just plough on till that beggar comes. I know he will come to the minute."

Sadly and doggedly he turned the iron handle, and turned and turned again; and then he panted and rested a minute, and then doggedly to his idle toil again. He was now so fatigued that his head seemed to have come loose, he could not hold it up, and it went round and round and round with the crank-handle. Hence it was that Mr. Fry stood at the mouth of the den without the other seeing him. "Halt," said Fry. Robinson looked up, and there was the turnkey inspecting him with a discontented air. "I'm done," thought Robinson, "here he is as black as thunder—the number not right, no doubt."

"What are ye at?" growled Fry. "You are forty over," and the said Fry looked not only ill-used, but a little unhappy. Robinson's good behaviour had disappointed the poor soul.

This Fry was a grim oddity; he experienced a feeble complacency when things went wrong—but never else.

The thief exulted, and was taken back to his cell. Dinner came almost immediately; four ounces of meat instead of three, two ounces less bread, but a large access of potatoes, which more than balanced the account.

The next day Robinson was put on the crank again, but not till the afternoon. He had finished about half his task when he heard at some little distance from him a faint moaning. His first impulse was to run out of his cell and see what was the matter, but Hodges and Fry were both in the yard, and he knew that they would report him for punishment upon the least breach of discipline. So he turned and turned the crank, with these moans ringing in his ears and perplexing his soul.

Finding that they did not cease, he peeped cautiously into the yard, and there he saw the governor himself as well as Hodges and Fry; all three were standing close to the place whence these groans issued, and with an air of complete unconcern.

But presently the groans ceased, and then mysteriously enough the little group of disciplinarians threw off their apathy. Hodges and Fry went hastily to the pump with buckets, which they filled, and then came back to the governor; the next minute Robinson heard water dashed repeatedly against the walls of the cell, and then the

governor laughed, and Hodges laughed, and even the gloomy Fry vented a brief grim chuckle.

And now Robinson quivered with curiosity as he turned his crank, but there was no means of gratifying it. It so happened, however, that some ten minutes later the governor sent Hodges and Fry to another part of the prison, and they had not been gone long before a message came to himself, on which he went hastily out, and the yard was left empty. Robinson's curiosity had reached such a pitch, that notwithstanding the risk he ran, for he knew the governor would send back to the yard the very first disengaged officer he met, he could not stay quiet. As the governor closed the gate he ran with all speed to the cell, he darted in, and then the thief saw what made the three honest men laugh so. He saw it, and started back with a cry of dismay, for the sight chilled the felon to the bone.

A lad about fifteen years of age was pinned against the wall in agony by a leathern belt passed round his shoulders and drawn violently round two staples in the wall. His arms were jammed against his sides by a strait waistcoat fastened with straps behind, and those straps drawn with the utmost severity. But this was not all. A high leathern collar, a quarter of an inch thick, squeezed his throat in its iron grasp. His hair and his clothes were drenched with water, which had been thrown in bucketfuls over him, and now dripped from him on the floor. His face was white, his lips livid, his eyes were nearly glazed, and his teeth chattered with cold and pain.

A more unprincipled man than Robinson did not exist; but burglary and larceny do not extinguish humanity in a thinking rascal, as resigning the soul to system can extinguish it in a dull dog.

"Oh, what is this?" cried Robinson, "what are the villains doing to you?"

He received no answer; but the boy's eyes opened wide, and he turned those glazing eyes, the only part of his body he could turn, towards the speaker. Robinson ran up to him and began to try and loosen him.

At this the boy cried out, almost screaming with terror, "Let me alone! let me alone! they'll give it me worse if you do, and they'll serve you out too."

"But you will die, boy. Look at his poor lips!"

"No, no, no! I shan't die! No such luck!" cried the

boy, impatiently and wildly. "Thank you for speaking kind to me. Who are you? tell me quick and go. I am Josephs, No. 15, Corridor A."

"I am Robinson, No. 19, Corridor B."

"Good-bye, Robinson; I shan't forget you. Hark, the door! Go! go! go! go! go!"

Robinson was already gone. He had fled at the first click of a key in the outward door, and darted into his cell at the moment Fry got into the yard. An instinct of suspicion led this man straight to Robinson's hermitage. He found him hard at work. Fry scrutinised his countenance, but Robinson was too good an actor to betray himself; only when Fry passed on he drew a long breath. What he had seen surprised as well as alarmed him, for he had always been told the new system discouraged personal violence of all sorts; and in all his experience of the old jails he had never seen a prisoner abused so savagely as the young martyr in the adjoining cell. His own work done, he left for his own dormitory. He was uneasy, and his heart was heavy for poor Josephs, but he dared not even cast a look towards his place of torture, for the other executioners had returned, and Fry followed grim at his heels like a mastiff dogging a stranger out of the premises.

That evening Robinson spent in gloomy reflections and forebodings. "I wish I was in the hulks, or anywhere out of this place," said he. As for Josephs, the governor, after inspecting his torture for a few minutes, left the yard again with his subordinates, and Josephs was left alone with his great torture for two hours more; then Hodges came in, and began to loose him, swearing at him all the time for a little rebellious monkey that gave more trouble than enough. The rebellious monkey made no answer, but crawled slowly away to his dungeon, shivering in his drenched clothes, stiff and sore, his bones full of pain, his heart full of despondency.

Robinson had now eight thousand turns of the crank per day, and very hard work he found it; but he preferred it to being buried alive all day in his cell: and warned by Josephs' fate, he went at the crank with all his soul, and never gave them an excuse for calling him "refractory." It happened, however, one day just after breakfast, that he was taken with a headache and shivering; and not getting better after chapel, but rather worse, he rang his bell and begged to see the surgeon. The surgeon ought to have

been in the jail at this hour: he was not, though, and as he had been the day before, and was accustomed to neglect the prisoners for anyone who paid better, he was not expected this day. Soon after Fry came to the cell and ordered Robinson out to the crank. Robinson told him he was too ill to work.

"I must have the surgeon's authority for that, before I listen to it," replied Fry, amateur of routine.

"But he is not in the jail, or you would have it."

"Then he ought to be."

"Well, is it my fault he's shirking his duty? Send for him, and you'll see he will tell you I am not fit for the crank to-day; my head is splitting."

"Come, no gammon, No. 19; it is the crank or the jacket, or else the black-hole. So take which you like best."

Robinson rose with a groan of pain and despondency.

"It is only eight thousand words you have got to say to it; and that is not many for such a tongue as yours."

At the end of the time Fry came to the mouth of the labour-cell with a grim chuckle: "He will never have done his number this time." He found Robinson kneeling on the ground, almost insensible, the crank-handle convulsively grasped in his hands. Fry's first glance was at this figure, that a painter might have taken for a picture of labour overtasked, but this was neither new nor interesting to Fry. He went eagerly to examine the meter of the crank—there lay his heart, such as it was—and to his sorrow he found that No. 19 had done his work before he broke down. What it cost the poor fever-stricken wretch to do it can easier be imagined than described.

They assisted Robinson to his cell, and that night he was in a burning fever. The next day the surgeon happened by some accident to be at his post, and prescribed change of diet and medicines for him. "He would be better in the infirmary."

"Why?" said the governor.

"More air."

"Nonsense, there is plenty of air here; there is a constant stream of air comes in through this," and he pointed to a revolving cylinder in the window constructed for that purpose. "You give him the right stuff, doctor," said Hawes jocosely, "and he won't slip his wind this time."

The surgeon acquiesced, according to custom.

It was not for him to contradict Hawes, who allowed him to attend the jail or neglect it according to his convenience,

i.e., to come three or four times a week at different hours, instead of twice every day at fixed hours.

It was two days after this that the governor saw Hodges come out of a cell, laughing.

"What are ye grinning at?" said he in his amiable way.

"No. 19 is light-headed, sir, and I have been listening to him. It would make a cat laugh," said Hodges apologetically. He knew well enough the governor did not approve of laughing in the jail.

The governor said nothing, but made a motion with his hand, and Hodges opened cell 19, and they both went in.

No. 19 lay on his back, flushed and restless, with his eyes fixed on vacancy. He was talking incessantly and without sequence. I should fail signally were I to attempt to transfer his words to paper. I feel my weakness, and the strength of others who in my day have shown a singular power of fixing on paper the volatile particles of frenzy. However, in a word, the poor thief was talking as our poetasters write, and amidst his gunpowder, daffodils, bosh, and other constellations, there mingled gleams of sense and feeling that would have made you and me very sad.

He often recurred to a girl he called Mary, and said a few gentle words to her; then off again into the wildest flights. While Mr. Hawes and his myrmidons were laughing at him, he suddenly fixed his eyes on some imaginary figure on the opposite wall, and began to cry out loudly, "Take him down. Don't you see you are killing him? The collar is choking him! See how white he is! His eyes stare! The boy will die! Murder, murder, murder! I can't bear to see him die." And with these words he buried his head in the bed-clothes.

Mr. Hawes looked at Mr. Fry; Mr. Fry answered the look: "He must have seen Josephs the other day."

"Ay! he is mighty curious. Well, when he gets well!" and, shaking his fist at the sufferer, Mr. Hawes went out of the cell soon after.

CHAPTER XI.

"WHAT is your report about No. 19, doctor?"

"The fever is gone."

"He is well, then?"

"He is well of the fever, but a fever leaves the patient in

a state of debility for some days. I have ordered him meat twice a day—that is, meat once and soup once."

"Then you report him cured of his fever?"

"Certainly."

"Hodges, put No. 19 on the crank."

"Yes, sir."

Even the surgeon opened his eyes at this. "Why, he is as weak as a child," said he.

"Will it kill him?"

"Certainly not; and for the best of all reasons. He can't possibly do it."

"You don't know what these fellows can do when they are forced."

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders and passed on to his other patients. Robinson was taken out into the yard. "What a blessing the fresh air is!" said he, gulping in the atmosphere of the yard. "I should have got well long ago if I had not been stifled in my cell for want of room and air."

Robinson went to the crank in good spirits. He did not know how weak he was till he began to work, but he soon found out he could not do the task in the time. He thought, therefore, the wisest plan would be not to exhaust himself in vain efforts, and he sat quietly down and did nothing. In this posture he was found by Hawes and his myrmidons.

"What are you doing there not working?"

"Sir, I am only just getting well of a fever, and I am as weak as water."

"And that is why you are not trying to do anything, eh?"

"I have tried, sir, and it is impossible. I am not fit to turn this heavy crank."

"Well, then, I must try if I can't make you. Fetch the jacket."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't torture me, sir. There is nobody more willing to work than I am; and if you will but give me a day or two to get my strength after the fever, you shall see how I will work."

"There, there! —— your palaver! Strap him up."

He was in no condition to resist, and moreover knew resistance was useless. They jammed him in the jacket, pinned him tight to the wall, and throttled him in the collar.

This collar, by a refinement of cruelty, was made with

unbound edges, so that when the victim, exhausted with the cruel cramp that racked his aching bones in the fierce grip of Hawes' infernal machine, sank his heavy head and drooped his chin, the jagged collar sawed him directly, and, lacerating the flesh, drove him away from even this miserable approach to ease. Robinson had formed no idea of the torture. The victims of the Inquisition would have gained but little by becoming the victims of the separate and silent system in —— Jail.

They left the poor fellow pinned to the wall, jammed in the strait waistcoat, and throttled in the round saw. Weakened by fever and unnatural exertion, he succumbed sooner than the inquisitors had calculated upon. The next time they came into the yard they found him black in the face, his lips livid, insensible, throttled, and dying. Another half-minute and there would have hung a corpse in the Hawes pillory.

When they saw how nearly he was gone, they were all at him together. One unclasped the saw collar, one unbraced the waistcoat, another sprinkled water over him—not a bucketful this time, because they would have wetted themselves. Released from the infernal machine, the body of No. 19 fell like a lump of clay upon the men who had reduced him to this condition. Then these worthies were in some little trepidation; for though they had caused the death of many men during the last two years, they had not yet, as it happened, murdered a single one on the spot openly and honestly like this, and they feared they might get into trouble. Adjoining the yard was a bathroom; to this they carried No. 19; they stripped him, and let the water run upon him from the cock, but he did not come to; then they scrubbed him just as they would a brick floor with a hard brush upon the back, till his flesh was as red as blood; with this and the water together he began to gasp and sigh and faintly come back from insensibility to a new set of tortures; but so long was the struggle between life and death, that these men of business, detained thus unconscionably about a single thief, lost all patience with him; one scrubbed him till the blood came under the bristles, another seized him by the hair of his head and jerked his head violently back several times, and this gave him such pain that he began to struggle instinctively, and, the blood now fairly set in motion, he soon moved. The last thing he remembered was a body full of aching bones; the first he awoke to was the

sensation of being flayed alive from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot.

The first word he heard was, "Put his clothes on his shamming carcass!"

"Shall we dry him, sir?"

"Dry him!" roared the governor, with an oath. "No! Hasn't he given us trouble enough?" (Another oath.)

They flung his clothes upon his red-hot dripping skin, and Hodges gave him a brutal push. "Go to your cell." Robinson crawled off, often wincing, and trying in vain to keep his clothes from rubbing those parts of his person where they had scrubbed the skin off him.

Hawes eyed him with grim superiority. Suddenly he had an inspiration. "Come back!" shouted he. "I never was beat by a prisoner yet, and I never will. Strap him up." At this command even the turnkeys looked amazed at one another, and hesitated. Then the governor swore horribly at them, and Hodges, without another word, went for the jacket.

They took hold of him; he made no resistance; he never even looked at them. He never took his eye off Hawes; on him his eye fastened like a basilisk. They took him away, and pinioned, jammed, and throttled him to the wall again. Hodges was set to watch him, and a bucket of water near to throw over him should he show the least sign of shamming again. In an hour another turnkey came and relieved Hodges—in another hour Fry relieved him, for this was tiresome work for a poor turnkey—in another hour a new hand relieved Fry, but nobody relieved No. 19.

Five mortal hours had he been in the vice without shamming. The pain his skin suffered from the late remedies, and the deadly rage at his heart, gave him unnatural powers of resistance, but at last the infernal machine conquered, and he began to turn dead faint; then Hodges, his sentinel at the time, caught up the bucket and dashed the whole contents over him. The effect was magical; the shock took away his breath for a moment, but the next the blood seemed to glow with fire in his veins, and he felt a general access of vigour to bear his torture. When this man had been six hours in the vice, the governor and his myrmidons came into the yard and unstrapped him.

"You did not beat me, you see, after all," said the governor to No. 19. The turnkeys heard and revered their chief. No. 19 looked him full in the face with an eye glittering like a sabre, but said no word.

"Sulky brute!" cried the governor, "lock him up" (oath). And that evening, as a warder was rolling the prisoners' supper along the little natural railway made by the two railings of Corridor B, the governor stopped the carriage and asked for 19's tin. It was given him, and he abstracted one-half of the man's gruel. Refractory in the yard to-day; but I'll break him before I've done with him" (oath).

The next day, brushes were wanted for the jail. This saved Robinson for that day. It was little Josephs' turn to suffer. The governor put him on a favourite crank of his, and gave him eight thousand turns to do in four hours and a half. He knew the boy could not do it, and this was only a formula he went through previous to pillorying the lad. Josephs had been in the pillory about an hour, when it so happened that the Rev. John Jones, the chaplain of the jail, came into the yard. Seeing a group of warders at the mouth of a labour-cell, he walked up to them, and there was Joseph in *peine forte et dure*.

"What is this lad's offence?" inquired Mr. Jones.

"Refractory at the crank," was the reply.

"Why, Josephs," said the reverend gentleman, "you told me you would always do your best."

"So I do, your reverence," gasped Josephs, "but this crank is too heavy for a lad like me, and that is why I am put on it to get punished."

"Hold your tongue," said Hodges roughly.

"Why is he to hold his tongue, Mr. Hodges?" said the chaplain quietly; "how is he to answer my question if he holds his tongue? You forget yourself."

"Ugh! beg your pardon, sir, but this one has always got some excuse or other."

"What is the matter?" roared a rough voice behind the speakers. This was Hawes, who had approached them unobserved.

"He is gammoning his reverence, sir—that is all."

"What has he been saying?"

"That the crank is too heavy for him, sir, and the waistcoat is strapped too tight, it seems."

"Who says so?"

"I think so, Mr. Hawes."

"Will you take a bit of advice, sir? If you wish a prisoner well, you don't come between him and me. It will always be the worse for him, for I am master here, and master I will be."

"Mr. Hawes," replied the chaplain, "I have never done or said anything in the prison to lessen your authority, but privately I must remonstrate against the uncommon severities practised upon prisoners in this jail. If you will listen to me, I shall be much obliged to you; if not, I am afraid I must, as a matter of conscience, call the attention of the visiting justices to the question."

"Well, parson, the justices will be in the jail to-day; you tell them your story, and I will tell them mine," said Hawes, with a cool air of defiance.

Sure enough, at five o'clock in the afternoon, two of the visiting justices arrived, accompanied by Mr. Wright, a young magistrate. They were met at the door by Hawes, who wore a look of delight at their appearance. They went round the prison with him, whilst he detained them in the centre of the building, till he had sent Hodges secretly to undo Josephs and set him on the crank; and here the party found him at work.

"You have been a long time on the crank, my lad," said Hawes; "you may go to your cell."

Josephs touched his cap to the governor and the gentlemen, and went off.

"That is a nice, quiet-looking boy," said one of the justices; "what is he in for?"

"He is in this time for stealing a piece of beef out of a butcher's shop."

"This time! what! is he a hardened offender? He does not look it."

"He has been three times in prison; once for throwing stones, once for orchard-robbing, and this time for the beef."

"What a young villain! at his age!"

"Don't say that, Williams," said Mr. Wright drily; "you and I were just at great villains at his age. Didn't we throw stones? Rather!"

Hawes laughed in an adulatory manner, but observing that Mr. Williams, who was a grave, pompous personage, did not smile at all, he added—

"But not to do mischief, like this one, I'll be bound."

"No," said Mr. Williams, with an air of ruffled dignity.

"No?" cried the other, "where is your memory? Why, we threw stones at everything and everybody, and I suppose we did not always miss, eh? I remember your throwing a stone through the window of a place of worship (this was a

schoolfellow of mine, and led me into all sorts of wickedness): I say, was it a Wesleyan shop, Williams, or a Baptist? for I forget. Never mind, you had a fit of orthodoxy. What was the young villain's second offence?"

"Robbing an orchard, sir."

"The scoundrel! Robbing an orchard? Oh, what sweet reminiscences those words recall. I say, Williams, do you remember us two robbing Farmer Harris's orchard?"

"I remember you robbing it, and my character suffering for it."

"I don't remember that; but I remember my climbing the pear-tree, and flinging the pears down, and finding them all grabbed on my descent. What is the young villain's next? Oh, snipping a piece off a counter. Ah! we never did that, because we could always get it without stealing it."

With this Mr. Wright strolled away from the others, having had what the jocose wretch used to call "a slap at humbug."

His absence was a relief to the others. These did not come there to utter sense in fun, but to jest in sober earnest.

Mr. Williams hinted as much, and Hawes, whose cue it was to assent in everything to the justices, brightened his face up at the remark.

"Will you visit the cells, gentlemen," said he, with an accent of cordial invitation, "or inspect the book first?"

They gave precedence to the latter.

By the book was meant the log-book of the jail. In it the governor was required to report for the justices and the Home Office all jail events a little out of the usual routine. For instance, all punishments of prisoners, all considerable sicknesses, deaths, and their supposed causes, etc., etc.

"This Josephs seems by the book to be an ill-conditioned fellow; he is often down for punishment."

"Yes; he hates work. About Gillies, sir—ringing his bell, and pretending it was an accident!"

"Yes; how old is he?"

"Thirteen."

"Is this his first offence?"

"Not by a good many. I think, gentlemen, if you were to order him a flogging, it would be better for him in the end."

"Well, give him twenty lashes. Eh! Palmer?"

Mr. Palmer assented by a nod.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Hawes, "but will you allow me to make a remark?"

"Certainly, Mr. Hawes, certainly!"

"I find twenty lashes all at once rather too much for a lad of that age. Now, if you would allow me to divide the punishment into two, so that his health might not be endangered by it, then we could give him ten or even twelve, and after a day or two as many more."

"That speaks well for your humanity, Mr. Hawes; your zeal we have long known."

"Augh! sir! sir!"

"I will sign the order; and we authorise you here to divide the punishment according to your own suggestion" —(order signed).

The justices then went round the cells, accompanied by Hawes. They went into the cells with an expression of a little curiosity but more repugnance on their faces, and asked several prisoners if they were well and contented. The men looked with the shrewdness of their class into their visitors' faces and measured them; saw there, first, a feeble understanding; secondly, an adamantine prejudice; saw that in those eyes they were wild beasts and Hawes an angel, and answered to please Hawes, whose eye was fixed on them all this time, and in whose power they felt they were.

All expressed their content: some in tones so languid and empty of heart that none but Justice Shallow could have helped seeing through the humbug. Others did it better; and not a few overdid it, so that any but Justice Shallow would have seen through them. These last told Messrs. Shallow and Slender that the best thing that ever happened to them was coming to —— Jail. They thanked Heaven they had been pulled up short in an evil career that must have ended in their ruin, body and soul. As for their present situation, they were never happier in their lives, and some of them doubted much, whether, when they should reach the penal settlements, the access of liberty would repay them for the increased temptations and the loss of quiet meditation and self-communion, and the good advice of Mr. Hawes, and of his reverence the chaplain.

The jail-birds who piped this tune were without a single exception the desperate cases of this moral hospital; they were old offenders—hardened scoundrels who meant to rob and kill and deceive to their dying day. While in prison

their game was to be as comfortable as they could. Hawes could make them uncomfortable; he was always there. Under these circumstances, to lie came on the instant as natural to them as to rob would have come, had some power transported them outside the prison doors with these words of penitence on their lips.

They asked where that Josephs' cell was. Hawes took them to him. They inspected him with a profound zoological look, to see whether it was more wolf or badger. Strange to say, it looked neither, but a simple, quiet youth of the human genus—species snob.

"He is very small to be such a ruffian," said Mr. Palmer.

"I am sorry, Josephs," said Mr. Williams pompously, "to find your name so often down for punishment."

Josephs looked up, hoping to see the light of sympathy in this speaker's eyes. He saw two owls' faces attempting eagle; but not reaching up to sparrow-hawk, and he was silent. He had no hope of being believed; moreover, the grim eye of Hawes rested on him, and no feebleness in it.

Messrs. Shallow and Slender receiving no answer from Josephs, who was afraid to tell the truth, were nettled, and left the cell shrugging their shoulders.

In the corridor they met the train just coming along the banisters with supper. Pompous Mr. Williams tasted the prison diet on the spot.

"It is excellent," cried he; "why, the gruel is like glue." And he fell into meditation.

"So far everything is as we could wish, Mr. Hawes, and it speaks well for the discipline and for yourself."

Hawes bowed with a gratified air.

"I will complete the inspection to-morrow."

Hawes accompanied the gentlemen to the outside gate. Here Mr. Williams turned. For the last minute or two he had been in the throes of an idea, and now he delivered himself of it.

"It would be well if Josephs' gruel were not made so strong for him."

Mr. Williams was not one of those who often say a great thing, but this deserves immortality, and could I confer immortality, this of Williams' should never die! Unlike most of the things we say, it does not deserve ever to die—

"IT WOULD BE WELL IF JOSEPHS' GRUEL WERE NOT MADE SO STRONG FOR HIM!!"

CHAPTER XII.

"WILL you eat your mutton with me to-day, Palmer?" said Mr. Williams, at the gate of the jail.

"I should be very happy, but I am engaged to dine with the lord lieutenant."

So Mr. Williams drove home to Ashtown Park, and had to sit down to dinner with his own small family party.

Mr. Williams' mutton consisted of first a little strong gravy soup lubricated and gelatinised with a little tapioca; *vis-à-vis* the soup a little piece of salmon cut out of the fish's centre; lobster patties, rissoles, and two things with French names, stinking of garlic, on the flank.

Enter a boiled turkey poult with delicate white sauce; a nice tongue, not too green nor too salt, and a small saddle of six-tooth mutton, home-bred, home-fed; after this a stewed pigeon, faced by greengage tart, and some yellow cream twenty-four hours old; item, an iced pudding. A little Stilton cheese brought up the rear with a nice salad. This made way for a foolish trifling dessert of muscadel grapes, guava jelly, and divers kickshaws, diluted with agreeable wines, varied by a little glass of Marasquino and Co., at junctures. So far so nice!

But alas! nothing is complete in this world, not even the dinner of a fair round justice with fat capon lined. There is always some drawback or deficiency here below—confound it! the wretch of a cook had forgotten to send up the gruel *à la* Josephs.

Next day, after Mr. Williams had visited the female prisoners, and complimented Hawes on having initiated them into the art of silence, he asked where the chaplain was. Hawes instantly despatched a messenger to inquire, and remembering that gentleman's threatened remonstrance, parried him by anticipation thus—

"By the bye, sir, I have a little complaint to make of him."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Williams, "what is that?"

"He took a prisoner's part against the discipline; but he doesn't know them, and they humbug him. But, sir, ought he to preach against me in the chapel of the jail?"

"Certainly not! Surely he has not been guilty of such a breach of discipline and good taste."

"Oh, but wait, sir," said Hawes, "hear the whole truth,

and then perhaps you will blame me. You must know, sir, that I sometimes let out an oath. I was in the army, and we used all to swear there; and now a little of it sticks to me in spite of my teeth, and if his reverence had done me the honour to take me to task privately about it, I would have taken off my hat to him; but it is another thing to go and preach at me for it before all the jail."

"Of course it is. Do you mean to say he did that?"

"He did, sir. Of course, he did not mention my name, but he preached five-and-thirty minutes all about swearing, and they all knew who he was hitting. I could see the warders grinning from ear to ear, as much as to say, 'There's another rap for you, governor!'"

"I'll speak to him."

"Thank you, sir; don't be hard on him, for he is a deserving officer: but if you would give him a quiet hint not to interfere with me. We have all of us plenty to do of our own in a jail, if he could but see it. Ah! here comes the chaplain, sir. I will leave you together, if you please;" and Mr. Hawes made off with a business air.

The chaplain came up and bowed to Mr. Williams, who saluted him in turn somewhat coldly. There was a short silence. Mr. Williams was concocting a dignified rebuke. Before he could get it out the chaplain began—

"I wished to speak with you yesterday, sir."

"I am at your service, Mr. Jones. What is it?"

"I want you to look into our punishments; they are far more numerous and severe than they used to be."

"On the contrary, I find them less numerous."

"Why, there is one punished every day."

"I have been carefully over the books, and I assure you there is a marked decrease in the number of punishments."

"Then they cannot be all put down."

"Nonsense, Mr. Jones, nonsense!"

"And then the severity of these punishments, sir! Is it your wish that a prisoner should be strapped in the jacket so tight that we cannot get a finger between the leather and his flesh?"

"Not unless he is refractory."

"But prisoners are very seldom refractory."

"Indeed! that is news to me."

"I assure you, sir, there are no quieter set of men than prisoners generally. They know there is nothing to be gained by resistance."

"They are on their good behaviour before you. You don't see through them, my good sir. They are like madmen—you would take them for lambs till they break out. Do you know a prisoner here called Josephs?"

"Yes, sir, perfectly well."

"Well, now, what is his character, may I ask?"

"HE IS A MILD, QUIET, DOCILE LAD."

"Ha! ha! ha! I thought so. Prisoners are the refuse of the earth. The governor knows them, and how to manage them. A discretion must be allowed him, and I see no reason to interfere between him and refractory prisoners, except when he invites us."

"You are aware that several attempts at suicide have been made within the last few months?"

"Sham attempts, yes."

"One was not sham, sir," said Mr. Jones gravely.

"Oh, Jackson, you mean. No, but he was a lunatic, and would have made away with himself anywhere—Hawes is convinced of that."

"Well, sir, I have told you the fact; I have remonstrated against the uncommon severities practised in this jail—severities unknown in Captain O'Connor's day."

"And I have received and answered your remonstrance, sir, and there that matter ought to end."

This, and the haughty tone with which it was said, discouraged and nettled the chaplain: he turned red, and said—

"In that case, sir, I have no more to say. I have discharged my conscience." With these words he was about to withdraw, but Mr. Williams stopped him.

"Mr. Jones, do you consider a clergyman justified in preaching at people?"

"Certainly not."

"The pulpit surely ought not to be made a handle for personality. It is not the way to make the pulpit itself respected."

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Mr. Hawes is much hurt at a sermon you preached against him."

"A sermon against him—never!"

"I beg your pardon; you preached a whole sermon against swearing—and he swears."

"Oh—yes! I remember—the Sunday before last. I certainly did reprobate in my discourse the habit of swearing. but no personality to Hawes was intended."

"No personality intended when you know he swears!"

"Yes, but the warders swear too. Why should Mr. Hawes take it all to himself?"

"Oh, if the turnkeys swear, then it was not so strictly personal."

"To be sure," put in Mr. Jones inadvertently, "I believe they learned it off the governor."

"There you see! Well, and even if they did not, why preach against the turnkeys? why preach at any individuals or upon passing events at all? I can remember the time no clergyman throughout the length and breadth of the land noticed passing events from the pulpit."

"I am as far from approving the practice as you are, sir."

"In those days the clergy and the laity respected one another, and there was peace in the Church."

"I can only repeat, sir, that I agree with you; the pulpit should be consecrated to eternal truths, not passing events."

"Good! very good! Well then?"

"What Mr. Hawes complains of was a mere accident."

"An accident, Mr. Jones? Oh, Mr. Jones!"

"An accident which I undertake to explain to Mr. Hawes himself."

"By all means; that will be the best way of making friends again. I need not tell you that a jail could not go on in which the governor and the chaplain did not pull together. The fact is, Mr. Jones, the clergy of late have been assuming a little too much, and that has made the laity a little jealous. Now, although you are a clergyman, you are Her Majesty's servant so long as you are here, and must co-operate with the general system of the jail. Come, sir, you are younger than I am; let me give you a piece of advice—'DON'T OVERSTEP YOUR DUTY,' etc."

In this strain Mr. Williams buz, buz, buzzed longer than I can afford him paper, it is so dear. He pumped a strain of time-honoured phrases on his hearer, and dissolved away with him as the overflow of a pump carries away a straw on its shallow stream down a stable-yard.

When the pump was pumped dry, he stopped.

Then the chaplain, who had listened with singular politeness, got in a word. "You forget, sir, I have resigned the chaplaincy of the jail!"

"Oh! ah! yes! well, then, I need say no more, sir; good-day, Mr. Jones."

"Good-morning, sir."

Soon after this up came Hawes with a cheerful countenance.

"Well, parson, are you to manage the prisoners, and I to preach to them, or are we to go on as we are?"

"Things are to go on as they are, Mr. Hawes; but that is nothing to me, I have discharged my conscience. I have remonstrated against the severities practised on our prisoners. COLD WATER HAS BEEN THROWN ON MY REMONSTRANCES, and I shall therefore interfere no more."

"That is the wise way to look at it, you may depend."

"We shall see which was in the right; I have discharged my conscience. But, Mr. Hawes, I am hurt you should say I preached a sermon against you."

"I daresay you are, sir, but who began it? If you had not talked of complaining to the justices of me, I should never have said a word against you."

"That is all settled; but it is due to my character to show you that I had no intention of pointing at you or any living creature from the pulpit."

"Well, make me believe that."

"If you will do me the favour to come to my room I can prove it to you."

The chaplain took the governor to his room and opened two drawers in a massive table.

"Mr. Hawes," said he, "do you see this pile of sermons in this right-hand drawer?"

"I see them," said Hawes, with a doleful air, "and I suppose I shall hear some of them before long."

"These," said Mr. Jones, smiling with perfect good-humour at the innocuous sneer, "are sermons I composed when I was curate of Little Stoke. Of late I have been going regularly through my Little Stoke discourses, as you may see. I take one from the pile in this drawer, and after first preaching it in the jail, I place it in the left drawer on that smaller pile."

"That you mayn't preach it again by accident; well, that is business."

"If you look into the left pile near the top, you will find the one I preached against profane discourse, with the date at which it was first composed."

"Here it is, sir—Little Stoke, May 15, 1847."

"Well, Mr. Hawes, now was that written against you?—come!"

"No! I confess it could not; but look here, if a man sends a bullet into me, it doesn't matter to me whether he made the gun on purpose, or shot me out of an old one that he had got by him."

"But I tell you that I took the sermon out in its turn, and knew no more what it was about until I opened it in the pulpit, than I know what this one is about which I am going to preach next Sunday morning—it was all chance."

"It was my bad luck, I suppose," said Hawes a little sulkily.

"And mine too. Could I anticipate that a discourse composed for and preached to a rural congregation would be deemed to have a personal application here?"

"Well, no!"

"I have now only to add that I extremely regret the circumstance."

"Say no more, sir. When a gentleman expresses his regret to another gentleman, there is an end of the grievance."

"I will take care that sort of thing never happens again."

"Enough said, sir."

"It never can, however, for I shall preach but one more Sunday here."

"And I am very sorry for it, Mr. Jones."

"And after this occurrence I am determined to write both sermons for the occasion, so there is sure to be nothing personal in them."

"Yes, that is the surest way. Well, sir, you and I never had but this one little misunderstanding, and now that is explained, we shall part friends."

"A glass of ale, Mr. Hawes?"

"I don't care if I do, sir"—(the glasses were filled and emptied).—"I must go and look after my chickens; the justices have ordered Gillies to be flogged. You will be there, I suppose, in half an hour."

"Well, if my attendance is not absolutely necessary——"

"We will excuse you, sir, if not convenient."

"Thank you—good-morning!" and the reconciled officials parted.

Little Gillies was hoisted to receive twenty lashes; at the twelfth the governor ordered him down.

He broke off the tale as our magazines do, with a promise —"To be continued."

Little Gillies. like their readers, cried out, "No, sir. Oh,

sir, please flog me to an end, and ha' done with it. I don't feel the cuts near so much now—my back seems dead like."

Little Gillies was arguing against himself. Hawes had not divided his punishment with the view of lessening his pain. It was droll, but more sad than droll, to hear the poor little fellow begging Hawes to flog him to an end, to flog him out, with similar idioms.

"Hold your (oath) noise!" Hawes shrank with disgust from noise in his prison, and could not comprehend why the prisoners could not take their punishments without infringing upon the great and glorious silence of which the jail was the temple and he the high priest. "The beggars get no good by kicking up a row," argued he.

"Hold your noise!—take him to his cell!"

Whether it was because he had desecrated the temple with noise, or from the accident of having attracted the governor's attention, the weight of the system fell on this small object now.

Gillies was ordered to make a fabulous number of crank revolutions—fabulous, at least, in connection with his tender age; he was put on the lightest crank, but the lightest was heavy to thirteen years. Not being the infant Hercules, he could not perform this labour; so Hawes put him in jacket and collar almost the whole day. His young and supple frame was in his favour, but once or twice he could hardly help shamming, and then they threw half a bucket over him.

The next day he was put on the crank, and not being able to complete the task that was set him before dinner, he was strapped up until the evening. The next day the governor tried another tack. He took away his meat, soup, and gruel, and gave him nothing but bread and water. Strange to say, this change of diet did not supply the deficiency; he could not do the infant Hercules his work even on bread and water. Then the governor deprived the obstinate little dog of his chapel. "If you won't work, I'm (participle) if you shall pray." The boy missed the recreation of hearing Mr. Jones hum the Liturgy—missed it in a way you cannot conceive. Your soporific was his excitement; think of that.

Little Gillies became sadly dispirited and weaker at the crank than before; ergo, the governor sentenced him to be fourteen days without bed or gas.

But when they took away his bed and did not light his gas, little Gillies began to lose his temper; he made a great

row about this last stroke of discipline. "I won t live such a life as this," said little Gillies in a pet. "Why don't the governor hang me at once?"

"What is that noise?" roared the governor, who was in the corridor, and had long ears.

"It is No. 50 kicking up a row at having his bed and gas taken," replied a turnkey, with a note of admiration in his voice.

The governor bounced into the cell. "Are you grumbling at that, you rebellious young rascal? You forget there are a dozen lashes owing you yet." Now the boy had not forgotten, but he hoped the governor had. "Well, you shall have the rest to-morrow."

With these words ringing in his ears, little Gillies was locked up for the night at six o'clock; his companions, darkness and unrest—for a prisoner's bed is the most comfortable thing he has, and the change from it to a stone floor is as great to him as it would be to us—darkness and unrest, and the cat waiting to spring on him at break of day. *Quæ cum ita erant.* As the warder put the key into his cell the next morning, he heard a strange gurgling; he opened the door quickly, and there was little Gillies hanging; a chair was near him on which he had got to suspend himself by his handkerchief from the window; he was black in the face, but struggling violently, and had one hand above his head convulsively clutching the handkerchief. Fry lifted him up by the knees, and with some difficulty loosed the handkerchief.

Little Gillies, as soon as his throat could vent a sound, roared with fright at the recent peril, and then cried a bit, finally expressed a hope his breakfast would not be taken from him for this act of insubordination.

This infraction of discipline was immediately reported to the governor.

"Little brute," cried Hawes viciously, "I'll work him!"

"Oh, he knew I was at hand," said Fry, "or he would not have tried it."

"Of course he would not. I remember last night he was grumbling at his bed being taken away. I'll serve him out!"

Soon after this the governor met the chaplain, and told him the case. "He shall make you an apology"—imperative mood him.

"Me an apology!"

"Of course; you are the officer that has the care of his soul, and he shall apologise to you for making away with it, or trying it on."

This resolution was conveyed to Gillies with fearful threats; so when the chaplain visited him he had got his lesson pat.

"I beg your reverence's pardon for hanging myself," began he at sight, rather loud, and as bold as brass.

"Beg the Almighty's pardon, not mine."

"No; the governor said it was yours I was to beg," demurred Gillies.

"Very well. But you should beg God's pardon more than mine."

"For why, sir?"

"For attempting your life, which was His gift."

"Oh, I needn't beg His pardon; He doesn't care what becomes of me; if He did He wouldn't let them bully me as they do day after day, drat 'em."

"I am sorry to see one so young as you so hardened. I daresay the discipline of the jail is bitter to you—it is to all idle boys; but you might be in a much worse place—and will, if you do not mend."

"A worse place than this, your reverence! Oh, my eye!"

"And you ought to be thankful to Heaven for sending the turnkey at that moment (here I'm sorry to say little Gillies grinned satirically), or you would be in a worse place. Would you rather be here or in hell?" half asked, half explained the reverend gentleman in the superior tone of one closing a discussion for ever.

"In hell!!!" replied Gillies, opening his eyes with astonishment at the doubt.

Mr. Jones was dumfoundered; of all the mischances that befall us in argument, this coup perplexes us most. He looked down at the little ignorant wretch, and decided it would be useless to waste theology on him. He fell instead into familiar conversation with him, and then Gillies, with the natural communicativeness of youth, confessed to him "that he had heard the warder at the next cell before he ventured to step off the chair and suspend himself."

"Well, but you ran a great risk too. Suppose he had not come into your cell—suppose he had been called away for a minute."

"I should have been scragged, and no mistake," said the

boy, with a shiver. Throttling had proved no joke. "But I took my chance of that," added Gillies. "I was determined to give them a fright; besides, if he hadn't come, it would all be over by now, sir, and all the better for me, I know."

Further communication was closed by the crank, which demanded young Hopeful, by its mouth-piece, Fry. After dinner, to his infinite disgust, he received the other moiety of his flogging; but by a sort of sulky compensation, his bed was kicked into his cell again at night by Fry, acting under the governor's orders.

"That was not a bad move, hanging myself a little—a very little," said the young prig. He hooked up his recovered treasure; and, though smarting all over, coiled himself up in it, and in three minutes forgot present pain, past dangers, and troubles to come.

The plan pursued with Robinson was to keep him at low-water mark by lowering his diet; without this, so great was his natural energy and disposition to work, that no crank excuse could have been got for punishing him, and at this period he was too wise and self-restrained to give any other. But after a few days of unjust torture, he began to lose hope; and with hope, patience oozed away too, and his enemy saw with grim satisfaction wild flashes of mad rage come every now and then to his eye, harder and harder to suppress. "He will break out before long," said Hawes to himself, "and then——"

Robinson saw the game, and a deep dark hatred of his enemy fought on the side of his prudence. This bitter, raging struggle of contending passions in the thief's heart harmed his soul more than had years of burglary and petty larceny. All the vices of the old jail system are nothing compared with the diabolical effect of solitude on a heart smarting with daily wrongs.

Brooding on self is always corrupting; but to brood on self and wrongs is to ripen for madness, murder, and all crime. Between Robinson and these there lay one little bit of hope—only one, but it was a reasonable one. There was an official in the jail possessed of a large independent authority, and paid (Robinson argued) to take the side of humanity in the place. This man was the representative of the national religion in the jail, as Hawes was of the law. Robinson was too sharp at picking up everything in his way, and had been too often in prisons and their chapels

not to know that cruelty and injustice are contrary to the Gospel and to the national religion, which is in a great measure founded thereon. He therefore hoped and believed the chaplain of the jail would come between him and his persecutor if he could be made to understand the case. Now it happened just after the justices had thrown cold water on Mr. Jones' little expostulation, that Robinson was pinned to the wall, jammed in the waistcoat, and throttled in the collar. He had been thus some time, when, casting his despairing eyes around, they alighted upon the comely, respectable face of Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones was looking gravely at the victim.

Robinson devoured him with his eyes and his ears. He heard him say in an undertone—

"What is this for?"

"Hasn't done his work at the crank," was the answer.

Then Mr. Jones, after taking another look at the sufferer, gave a sigh and walked away. Robinson's hopes from this gentleman rose; moreover, part of his sermon next Sunday inveighed against inhumanity; and Robinson, who had no conception the sermon was several years old, looked on it as aimed at Hawes and his myrmidons, and as the precursor of other and effective remonstrances. Not long after this, to his delight, the chaplain visited him alone. He seized this opportunity of securing the good man's interference in his favour. He told him in glowing words the whole story of his sufferings; and, with a plain and manly eloquence, appealed to him to make his chapel words good, and come between the bloodhounds and their prey.

"Sir, there are twenty or thirty poor fellows besides me that will bless your four bones night and day, if you will but put out your hand and save us from being abused like dogs and nailed to the wall like kites and weasels. We are not vermin, sir; we are men. Many a worse man is abroad than we that are caged here like wild beasts. Our bodies are men's bodies, sir, and our hearts are men's hearts. You can't soften *their* hearts, for they haven't such a thing about them; but only just you open your mouth and speak your mind in right-down earnest, and you will shame them into treating us openly like human beings, let them hate us and scorn us at bottom as they will. We have no friend here, sir, but you—not one. Have pity on us! have pity on us!"

And the thief stretched out his hands, and fixed his ardent, glistening eyes upon the successor of the apostles.

The successor of the apostles hung his head, and showed plainly that he was not unmoved. A moment of suspense followed—Robinson hung upon his answer. At length Mr. Jones raised his head, and said with icy coldness—

"Mr. Hawes is the governor of this jail. I have no power to interfere with his acts, supported as they are by the visiting justices; and I have but one advice to give you: Submit to the discipline and to Mr. Hawes in everything; it will be the worse for you if you don't."

So saying, he went out abruptly, leaving his petitioner with his eyes fixed ruefully upon the door by which his last hope had left him.

The moment the reverend official had got outside the door, his countenance, which had fallen, took a complacent air. He prided himself that he had conquered an impulse, an idle impulse.

"The poor fellow is in the right," said he to himself as he left the cell; "but if I had let him see I thought so, he might have been encouraged to resist, and then he would have only suffered all the more."

And so, having done what he calculated was the expedient thing to do, he went his way, satisfied and at peace with Mr. Hawes and all mankind.

When he glided away and took hope with him, disdain, despair, and frenzy gushed from the thief's boiling bosom in one wild moan; and with that moan he dashed himself on his face on the floor, though it was as hard as Hawes and cold as Jones.

Thus he lay crushed in blank despair a moment; the next he rose fiercely to his knees. He looked up through the hole they called his window, and saw a little piece of blue sky no bigger than a Bible; he held his hand up to that blue sky, he fixed his dilating eye on that blue sky, and with one long raging yell of horrible words hurled from a heart set on fire by wrongs and despair and tempting fiends, he cursed the successor of the apostles before the Majesty of Heaven.

CHAPTER XIII.

Solitude is no barrier whatever to sin. Such prayers as Robinson's are a disgrace to those who provoke them, but a calamity to him who utters them. Robinson was now a far

worse man than ever he had been out of prison. The fiend had fixed a claw in his heart, and we may be sure he felt the recoil of his ill prayers. He hated the human race, which produced such creatures as Hawes, and nothing to keep them in check.

"From this hour I speak no more to any of those beasts!"

Such was his resolve, made with clenched teeth and nails; and he curled himself up like a snake, and turned his back upon mankind and his face to the wall. Robinson had begun his career in this place full of hopes. He hoped by good conduct to alleviate his condition, as he had done in other jails; conscious of various talents, he hoped by skill as well as by good conduct to better his condition even in a jail; such hopes are a part of our nature, and were not in his case unreasonable. These hopes were soon extinguished. He came down to a confident hope that by docility and good conduct he should escape all evils except those inseparable from a prisoner's lot.

When he discovered that Hawes loved to punish his prisoners, and indeed could hardly get through the day without it, and that his crank was an unavoidable trap to catch the prisoners and betray them to punishment, he sank lower and lower in despondency, till at last there was but one bit of blue hope in all his horizon. He still hoped something against tyranny and cruelty from the representative of the Gospel of mercy in the place. But when his reverence told him nothing was to be expected from that quarter, his last hope went out, and he was in utter darkness.

Yet Mr. Jones was not a hypocrite nor a monster; he was only a commonplace man—a thing moulded by circumstances instead of moulding them. In him the official outweighed the apostle, for a very good reason—he was commonplace. This was his defect. His crime was misplacing his commonplace self. A man has a right to be commonplace in the middle of the New Forest, or in the great desert, or at Fudley-cum-Pipes in the fens of Lincolnshire. But at the helm of a struggling nation, or in the command of an army in time of war, or at the head of the religious department of a jail, fighting against human wolves, tigers, and foxes, to be commonplace is an iniquity, and leads to crime.

The man was a humane man. It was not in his nature to be cruel to a prisoner, and his humanity was, like

himself, negative not positive, passive not active—of course; it was commonplace humanity.

After looking on in silence for a twelvemonth or two, he remonstrated against Hawes' barbarity. He would have done more; he would have stopped it—if it could have been stopped without any trouble. Cold water was thrown on his remonstrance; he cooled directly.

Now cold water and hot fire have been thrown on men battling for causes no higher nor holier than this, yet neither has fire been able to wither nor water to quench their honest zeal. But this good soul, on being sprinkled, laid down his arms; he was commonplace. Moreover, he was guilty of something besides cowardice. He let a small egotistical pique sully as well as betray a great cause. "The justices have thrown cold water on my remonstrance—very well, gentlemen, torture your prisoners *ad libitum;* I shall interfere no more; we shall see which was in the right, you or I."

This was a narrow little view of wide and terrible consequences; it was infinitesimal egotism—the spirit and essence of commonplace.

His inclinations were good, but feeble—he was commonplace. His heart was good, but tepid—he was commonplace. Had he loved the New Testament and the Saviour of mankind, he would have fought Hawes tooth and nail; he could not have helped it; but he did not love either; he only liked them—he was commonplace. When the thief cursed this man, he was guilty of an extravagance as well as a crime; the man was not worth cursing—he was commonplace.

The new chaplain arrived soon after these events. The new chaplain was accompanied by his friend the Rev. James Lepel, chaplain of a jail in the North of England. After five years' unremitting duty, he was now enjoying a week's leave of absence.

The three clergymen visited the cells. Mr. Lepel cross-examined several prisoners. The new chaplain spoke little, but seemed observant, and once or twice made a note. Now it so happened that almost the last cell they entered was Tom Robinson's. They found him sitting all of a heap in a corner, moody and sullen.

At sight of three black coats and white ties the thief opened his eyes, and with a sort of repugnance turned his back on the intruders.

"Come, my lad," said the turnkey sternly, "no tricks, if

you please. Turn round," cried he savagely, "and make your bow to the gentlemen."

Robinson wheeled round with flashing eyes, and checking an evident desire to dash at them, instantly made a bow so very low, so very obsequious, and, by a furtive expression, so contemptuous, that Mr. Lepel coloured with indignation and moved towards the door in silence.

The turnkey muttered, "He has been very strange this few days past. Mr. Fry thinks he is hardly safe." Then, turning to the new chaplain, the man, whose name was Evans, said, "Better not go into his cell, sir, without one of us with you."

"What is the matter with him?" inquired the reverend gentleman.

"Oh, I don't know as there is anything the matter with him; only he has been disciplined once or twice, and it goes down the wrong way with some of them at first starting. Governor says he will have to be put in the dark cell if he does not get better."

"The dark cell?—hum! Pray, what is the effect of the dark cell on a prisoner?"

"Well, sir, it cows them more than anything."

"Where are your dark cells?"

"They are down below, sir. You can look at them after the kitchen."

"I must go into the town," said Mr. Lepel, looking at his watch. "I promised to dine with my relations at three o'clock."

"Come and see the oubliettes first. We have seen everything else."

"With all my heart."

They descended below the ground-floor, and then Evans unlocked a massive tight-fitting door, opening upon what appeared to be a blank substance; this was, however, no substance, but vacancy without any degree of light. The light crossing the threshold from the open door seemed to cut a slice out of it.

The new-comers looked into it; Mr. Lepel with grim satisfaction, the other with awe and curiosity.

"When shall you be back, Lepel?" inquired he thoughtfully.

"Oh, before nine o'clock."

"Then perhaps you will both do me the honour to drink a cup of tea with me," said Mr. Jones courteously.

"With pleasure."

"Good-bye, then, for the present," said the new chaplain.
"Why, where are you going?"
"In here."
"What, into the dark cell?"
"Yes!"
"Well!" ejaculated Evans.
"You won't stay there long."
"Until you return, Lepel."
"What a fancy!"

Mr. Jones looked not a little surprised. The turnkey grinned. The reverend gentleman stepped at once into the cell, and was lost to sight.

"Do not let me out before eight o'clock," said his voice, "and you, Lepel, inquire for me as soon as you return, for I feel a little nervous. Now shut the door."

The door was closed on the reverend gentleman, and the little group outside, after looking at one another with a humorous expression, separated, and each went after his own affairs.

Evans lingered behind, and took a look at the massy door, behind which, for the first time, a man had gone voluntarily, and after grave deliberation delivered himself at long intervals of the two following profound reflections—

"Well, I'm blest!"
"Well, I'm blowed!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Lepel returned somewhat earlier than he had intended. On entering the jail, it so happened that he met the governor, and seized this opportunity of conversing with him.

He expressed at once so warm an admiration of the jail and the system pursued in it, that Hawes began to take a fancy to him.

They compared notes, and agreed that no system but the separate and silent had a leg to stand on; and, as they returned together from visiting the ground-floor cells, Mr. Lepel had the honour of giving a new light to Hawes himself.

"If I could have my way, the debtors should be in separate cells. I would have but one system in a jail."

Hawes laughed incredulously. "There would be a fine outcry if we treated the debtors the same way as we do the rogues."

"Mr. Hawes," said the other firmly, "an honest man very seldom finds his way into any part of a jail. Extravagant people, and tradesmen who have abused the principle of credit, deserve punishment, and above all require discipline and compulsory self-communion to bring them to amend their ways."

"That is right, sir," cried Hawes, a sudden light breaking on him, "and it certainly is a mistake letting them enjoy themselves."

"And corrupt each other."

Hawes.—A prison should be confinement.

Lepel.—And seclusion from all but profitable company.

Hawes.—It is not a place of amusement.

Lepel.—There should be no idle conversation.

"And no noise," put in Hawes hastily.

"However, this prison is a model for all the prisons in the land, and I shall feel quite sad when I go back to my duty in Cumberland."

"Cumberland? Why, you are our new chaplain, aren't ye?"

"No; I am not so fortunate; I am a friend of his; my name is Lepel."

"Oh, you are Mr. Lepel; and where is our one? I heard he had been all over the jail."

"What, have you not seen him?"

"No; he has never been near me. Not very polite, I think."

"Oh! oh!"

"Hollo! what is wrong?"

"I think I know where he is; he is not far off. I will go and find him, if you will excuse me."

"No; we won't trouble you. Here, Hodges, come here. Have you seen the new chaplain? where is he?"

"Well, sir, Evans tells me he is——" (click!)

"Confound you, don't stand grinning. Where is he?"

"In the black-hole, sir!"

"What d'ye mean by the black-hole? The dust-hole?"

"No, sir; I mean the dark cells."

"Then why don't you say the dark cells? Has he been there long?"

Mr. Lepel answered the question. "Ever since three o'clock, and it is nearly nine; and we are both of us to drink tea with Mr. Jones."

Mr. Hawes showed no hurry. "What did he want to go in them for?"

"I have no idea, unless it was to see what it is like."

"Well, but I like that!" said Hawes. "That is entering into the system. Let us see how he comes on."

Mr. Hawes, Mr. Lepel, and Hodges went to the dark cells; on their way they were joined by Evans.

The governor took out his own keys, and Evans having indicated the cell, for there were three, he unlocked it, and threw the door wide open. They all looked in, but there was nothing to be seen.

"I hope nothing is the matter," said Mr. Lepel, in considerable agitation, and he groped his way into the cave. As he put out his hand, it was taken almost violently by the self-immured, who cried—"Oh, Lepel!" and held him in a strong but tremulous grasp. Then, after a pause, he said more calmly, "The light dazzles me! the place seems on fire now! Perhaps you will be kind enough to lend me your arm, Lepel."

Mr. Lepel led him out; he had one hand before his eyes, which he gradually withdrew while speaking. He found himself in the middle of a group, with a sly sneer on their faces mixed with some curiosity.

"How long have I been there?" asked he quietly.

"Six hours; it is nine o'clock."

"Only six hours? incredible!"

"Well, sir, I suppose you are not sorry to be out?"

"This is Mr. Hawes, the governor," put in Mr. Lepel.

Hawes continued jocosely, "What does it feel like, sir?"

"I shall have the honour of telling you that in private, Mr. Hawes. I think, Lepel, we have an engagment with Mr. Jones at nine o'clock." So saying, the new chaplain, with a bow to the governor, took his friend's arm, and went to tea with Mr. Jones.

"There, now," said Hawes to the turnkeys, "that is a gentleman. He doesn't blurt everything out before you fellows; he reserves it for his superior officer."

Next morning the new chaplain requested Mr. Lepel to visit the prisoners' cells in a certain order, and make notes of their characters as far as he could guess them. He himself visited them in another order, and made his notes. In the evening they compared these. We must be content with an extract or two.

Mr. Lepel's.	The New Chaplain's.
Rock, No. 37. — A very promising subject, penitent and resigned. Says, "If the door	37, *Rock.*—Professes penitence. Asked him suddenly what sins weighed most on his

Mr. Lepel's.	The New Chaplain's.
of the prison was left open he would not go out." Has learned two hundred and fifty texts, and is learning fifteen a day.	conscience. No answer. Prepared with an abstract penitence, but no particulars; reason obvious. *Mem.* With this man speak on any topic rather than religion at present. Pray for this self-deceiver as I would for a murderer.
Josephs, No. .—An interesting boy; ignorant, but apparently well-disposed. In ill-health. The surgeon should be consulted about him.	*Josephs* ——. — An amiable boy; seems out of health and spirits. Says he has been overworked and punished for inability. Shall intercede with the governor for him. *Mem.* Pale and hollow-eyed; pulse feeble.
Strutt, No. .—Sullen, impenitent, and brutal. Says it is no use his learning texts, they won't stay in his head. Discontented; wants to go out in the yard. The best one can hope for here is, that the punishment, which he finds so severe, will deter him in future. Says he will never come here again, but doubts whether he shall get out alive. Gave him some tracts.	*Strutt.*—This poor man is in a state of deep depression. I much fear the want of light, and air, and society is crushing him. He is fifty years old. *Mem.* Inquire whether separate confinement tries men harder after a certain age. Talked to him; told him stories with all the animation I could. Stayed half an hour with him; he brightened up a little, and asked me to come again. Nothing to be done here at present but amuse the poor soul. *Mem.* Watch him jealously.
Jessup.—The prisoner whose term, owing to his excellent conduct, is reduced from twelve months to nine months, so that he goes out next week. Having discovered that the news had not been conveyed to him, I asked Mr. Hawes to let me be the bearer. When I told him, his only remark was, with an air of regret, "Then I shall not	*Jessup.*—Like Rock, professes extravagant penitence, indifference to personal liberty, and love of Scripture. He overdoes it greatly; however, it appears he has gained his point by it. He has induced Mr. Jones to plead for him in mitigation of punishment, and next week he leaves prison for a little while. He asked me to hear him

MR. LEPEL'S.

finish my Gospels!" I begged for an explanation, when he told me that for eight months he had been committing the Gospels to heart, and that he was just beginning St. John, which now he should never finish. I said he must finish it at home in the intervals of honest labour. His countenance brightened, and he said he would.

A most cheering case, and one of the best proofs of the efficacy of the separate and silent system I have met with for some time. I fear I almost grudge you the possession of such an example.

Robinson. — A bad subject, rebellious and savage; refuses to speak. Time and the discipline will probably break him off this; but I do not think he will ever make a good prisoner.

THE NEW CHAPLAIN'S.

some texts. I said, "No, my poor fellow; they will do you as much good whether I hear you them or not." By a light that flashed into his eye I saw he comprehended the equivoque; but he suppressed his intelligence, and answered piously, "That they will, your reverence."

Robinson.—This man wears a singular look of scorn as well as hatred, which, coupled with his repeated refusals to speak to me, provoked me so that I felt strongly tempted to knock him down. How unworthy, to be provoked at anything a great sufferer can say or do; every solitary prisoner must surely be a great sufferer.

My judgment is quite at fault here. I know no more than a child what is this man's character, and the cause of his strange conduct.

Mem. Inquire his antecedents of the turnkeys. Oh, Lord, enlighten me, and give me wisdom for the great and deep and difficult task I have so boldly undertaken.

The next day the new chaplain met the surgeon in the jail, and took him into Josephs' cell.

"He only wants a little rest and nourishing food; he would be the better for a little amusement, but——" and the man of science shrugged his shoulders.

"Can you read?" said Mr. Lepel.

"Very little, sir."

"Let the schoolmaster come to him every day," suggested that experienced individual. He knew what separate confinement was. What bores a boy out of prison amuses him in it.

Hawes gave a cold consent. So poor little Josephs had a richer diet and rest from crank and pillory, and the schoolmaster spent half an hour every day teaching him; and, above all, the new chaplain sat in his cell and told him stories that interested him—told him how very wicked some boys had been: what a many clever, wicked things they had done and not been happy; then how they had repented and learned to pray to be good, and how, by Divine help, they had become good; and how some had gone to heaven soon after, and were now happy and pure as the angels; and others had stayed on earth, and were good and honest and just men—not so happy as those others who were dead, but content (and that the wicked never are), and waiting God's pleasure to go away and be happy for ever.

Josephs listened to the good chaplain's tales and conversation with wonderful interest, and his face always brightened when that gentleman came into his cell. The schoolmaster reported him not quick, but docile. These were his halcyon days.

But Robinson remained a silent basilisk. The chaplain visited him every day, said one or two kind words to him, and retired without receiving a word or a look of acknowledgment. One day, surprised and hurt by this continued obduracy, the chaplain retired with an audible sigh. Robinson heard it, and ground his teeth with satisfaction. Solitary, tortured, and degraded, he had still found one whom he could annoy a little bit.

The governor and the new chaplain agreed charmingly; constant civilities passed between them. The chaplain assisted Mr. Hawes to turn the phrases of his yearly report, and Mr. Hawes more than repaid him by consenting to his introducing various handicrafts into the prison—at his own expense, not the county's.

"Parson must have got a longer purse than most of us," thought Hawes, and it increased his respect.

Hawes shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "You are just flinging your money into the dirt;" but the other, interpreting his look, said—

"I hope more good from this than from all the sermons I shall preach in your chapel."

Probably Mr. Hawes would not have been so indifferent had he known that this introduction of rational labour was intended as the first step towards undermining and expelling the sacred crank.

This clergyman had a secret horror and hatred of the crank. He called it a monster got by folly upon science to degrade labour below theft; for "theft is immoral, but crank labour is immoral and idiotic too," said he. The crank is a diabolical engine to keep thieves from ever being anything but thieves. He arrived at this conclusion by a chain of reasoning for which there is no room in a narrative already smothered in words.

This antiphthy to the crank quite overpowered him. He had been now three weeks in the jail, and all that time only thrice in the labour-yard. It cut his understanding like a knife to see a man turn a handle for hours and nothing come of it.

However, one day, from a sense of duty, he forced himself into the labour-yard, and walked wincing down the row.

"These are our schoolmen," said he. "As the schoolmen laboured most intellectually and scientifically — practical result, *nil*, so these labour harder than other men—result *nil*. This is literally 'beating the air.' The ancients imagined tortures particularly trying to nature, that of Sisyphus to wit; everlasting labour embittered by everlasting nihilification. We have made Sisyphism vulgar. Here are fifteen Sisyphi. Only the wise or ancients called this thing infernal torture; our old women call it salutary discipline."

He was running on in this style, heaping satire and sorrow upon the crank, when suddenly, at the mouth of one of the farthest cells, he stopped and threw up his hands with an ejaculation of astonishment and dismay. There was a man jammed in a strait waistcoat, pinned against the wall by a strap, and throttling in a huge collar; his face was white, his lips livid, and his eyes rolling despairingly: it was Thomas Robinson. This sight took away the chaplain's breath. When he recovered himself, "What is this?" said he to the turnkey sternly.

"Prisoner refractory at the crank," answered Hodges doggedly.

The clergyman walked up to Robinson and examined the collar, the waistcoat, and the strap. "Have you the governor's authority for this act?" said he firmly.

"Rule is if they won't do their work, the jacket."

"Have you the governor's authority for this particular act?"

"In a general way we have."

"In a word, you are not acting under his authority, and you know it. Take the man down this moment."

The men hesitated.

"If you don't, I shall."

The turnkeys, a little staggered by his firmness, began to confer in whispers. The chaplain, who was one of your decided men, could not wait the consultation. He sprang to Robinson's head, and began to undo the collar. The others, seeing this decided move, came and helped him. The collar and the strap being loosed, the thief's body, ensacked as it was, fell helplessly forward. He had fainted during the discussion; in fact, his senses were shut when the chaplain first came to the cell. The chaplain caught him, and, being a very strong man, saved him from a dangerous fall, and seated him gently with his back to the wall. Water was sprinkled in his face. The chaplain went hastily to find the governor. He came to him pale and out of breath.

"I found the turnkeys outraging a prisoner."

"Indeed!" said the governor. It was a new idea to him that anything could be an outrage on a prisoner.

"They confessed they had not your authority, so I took upon me to undo their act."

"Humph!"

"I now leave the matter in your hands, sir."

"I will see into it, sir."

The chaplain left Mr. Hawes abruptly, for he was seized with a sudden languor and nausea; he went to his own house, and there he was violently sick. Shaking off as quickly as he could this weakness, he went at once to Robinson's cell. He found him coiled up like a snake. He came hastily into the cell with the natural effusion of a man who had taken another man's part.

"I want to ask you one question: What had you done that they should use you like that?"

No answer.

"It is not from idle curiosity I ask you, but that I may be able to advise you, or intercede for you if the punishment should appear too severe for the offence."

No answer.

"Come, I would wait here ever so long upon the chance of your speaking to me if you were the only prisoner, but there are others in their solitude longing for me. Time is precious; will you speak to one who desires to be your friend?"

No answer.

A flush of impatience and anger crossed the chaplain's brow: in most men it would have found vent in words. This man but turned away to hide it from its object. He gulped his brief ire down, and said only, "So then I am never to be any use to you," and went sorrowfully away.

Robinson coiled himself up a little tighter, and hugged his hatred of all mankind closer, like a treasure that someone had just tried to do him out of.

As the chaplain came out of his cell he was met by Hawes, whose countenance wore a gloomy expression that soon found its way into words.

"The chaplain is not allowed to interfere between me and the prisoners in this jail."

"Explain, Mr. Hawes."

"You have been and ordered my turnkeys to relax punishment."

"You forget, Mr. Hawes, I explained to you that they were acting without the requisite authority from you."

"That is all right, and I have called them to account, but then you are not to order them either; you should have applied to me."

"I see! I see! Forgive me this little breach of routine where a human creature's sufferings would have been prolonged by etiquette."

"Ugh! Well, it must not occur again."

"I trust the occasion will not."

"For that matter, you will often see refractory prisoners punished in this jail. You had better mind your own business in the jail; it will find you work enough."

"I will, Mr. Hawes; to dissuade men from cruelty is a part of it."

"If you come between me and the prisoners, sir, you won't be long here."

The new chaplain smiled.

"What does it matter whether I'm here or in Patagonia, so that I do my duty wherever I am?" said he, with a fine mixture of good-humour and spirit.

Hawes turned his back rudely, and went and reduced Robinson's supper fifty per cent.

"Evans, is that sort of punishment often inflicted here?"

"Well, sir, yes. It is a common punishment of this jail."

"It must be very painful."

"No, sir, it's a little *on*comfortable, that is all; and then we've got such a lot here, we are obliged to be down on 'em like a sledge-hammer, or they'd eat us up alive."

"Have you got the things, the jacket, collar, etc."

"I know where to find them," said Evans, with a sly look.

"Bring them to me directly to this empty cell."

"Well, sir," higgled Evans, "in course I don't like to refuse your reverence."

"Then don't refuse me," retorted the other, sharp as a needle.

Evans went off directly and soon returned with the materials. The chaplain examined them awhile; he then took off his coat.

"Operate on me, Evans."

"Operate on you, sir?"

"Yes! There, don't stand staring, my good man, hold up the waistcoat—now strap it tight—tighter—no nonsense—Robinson was strapped tighter than that yesterday. I want to know what we are doing to our fellow-creatures in this place. The collar now."

"But, sir, the collar will nip you. I tell you that beforehand."

"Not more than it nips my prisoners. Now strap me to the wall. Why do you hesitate?"

"I don't know whether I am doing right, sir, you being a parson. Perhaps I shall have no luck after this."

"Don't be silly, Evans. *Volenti non fit injuria*—that means, you may torture a bishop if he bids you."

"There you are, sir."

"Yes, here I am! Now go away and come in half an hour."

"I think I had better stay, sir. You will soon be sick of it."

"Go, and come in half an hour," was the firm reply.

Our chaplain felt that if the man did not go he should not be five minutes before he asked to be released, and he was determined to know "what we are doing."

Evans had not been gone ten minutes before he bitterly repented letting him go; and when that worthy returned he

found him muttering faintly, "It is in a good cause—it is in a good cause."

Evans wore a grin.

"You shall pay for that grin," said the chaplain to himself.

"Well, sir, have you had enough of it?"

"Yes, Evans; you may loose me," said the other with affected nonchalance.

"What is it like, sir? Haw! haw!"

"It is as you described it, *on*comfortable; but the knowledge I have gained in it is invaluable. You shall share it."

"With all my heart, sir; you can tell me what it is like."

"Oh no! such knowledge can never be imparted by description; you shall take your turn in the jacket."

"Not if I know it."

"What, not for the sake of knowledge!"

"Oh, I can guess what it is like."

"But you will oblige me?"

"Some other way, sir, if you please."

"Besides, I will give you a guinea."

"Oh, that alters the case, sir. But only for half an hour."

"Only for half an hour."

Evans was triced up and pinned to the wall; the chaplain took out a guinea and placed it in his sight and walked out.

In about ten minutes he returned, and there was Evans, his face drawn down by pain.

"Well, how do you like it?"

"Oh, pretty well, sir; it isn't worth making an outcry about."

"Only a little *on*comfortable."

"That is all; if it wasn't for the confounded cramp."

"Let us compare notes," said the chaplain, sitting down opposite. "I found it worse than uncomfortable. First there was a terrible sense of utter impotence, then came on racking cramps, for which there was no relief, because I could not move."

"Oh!"

"What?"

"Nothing, sir! Mum—mum—dear guinea!"

"The jagged collar gave me much pain too; it rasped my poor throat like a file."

"Why the dickens didn't you tell me all this before, sir?" said Evans ruefully; "it is no use now I've been and gone into the same oven like a fool."

"I had my reasons for not telling you before. Good-bye for the present."

"Don't stay over the half-hour, for goodness' sake, sir."

"No; adieu for the present."

He did not go far: he listened and heard the plucky Evans groan. He came hastily in.

"Courage, my fine fellow, only eight minutes more and the guinea is yours."

"How many more minutes, sir?"

"Eight."

"Then, oh! undo me, sir, if you please."

"What! forfeit the guinea for eight minutes—seven, it is only seven now."

"Hang the guinea! let me down, sir, if there's pity in you."

"With all my heart," said the reverend gentleman, pocketing the guinea, and he loosed Evans with all speed.

The man stretched his limbs, with ejaculations of pain between every stretch, and put his handkerchief on very gingerly. He looked sulky and said nothing. The other watched him keenly, for there was something about him that showed his mind was working.

"There is your guinea."

"Oh no! I didn't earn it."

"Oh, if you think that (putting it to the lips of his pocket), let me make you a present of it" (handing it out again). Evans smiled. "It is a good servant. That little coin has got me one friend more for these poor prisoners. You don't understand me, Evans. Well, you will. Now, look at me; from this moment, sir, you and I stand on a different footing from others in this jail. We know what we are doing when we put a prisoner in that thing; the others don't. The greater the knowledge, the greater the guilt. May we both be kept from the crime of cruelty. Good-night!"

"Good-night, your reverence!" said the man gently, awed by his sudden solemnity.

The chaplain retired. Evans looked after him, and then down into his own hand.

"Well, I'm blowed!—well, I'm blest!—Got a guinea, though!!"

CHAPTER XV.

GOVERNOR HAWES had qualities good in themselves, but ill-directed, and therefore not good in their results—determination for one. He was not a man to yield a step to opposition. He was a much greater man than Jones: he was like a torrent, to whose progress if you oppose a great stone, it brawls and struggles past it and round it and over it with more vigour than before.

"I will be master in this jail!" was the creed of Hawes. He docked Robinson's supper one-half, ditto his breakfast next day, and set him a tremendous task of crank. Now in jail a day's food and a day's crank are too nicely balanced to admit of the weights being tampered with. So Robinson's demi-starvation paved the way for further punishment. At one o'clock he was five hundred revolutions short, and instead of going to his dinner, he was tied up in the infernal machine. Now the new chaplain came three times into the yard that day, and the third time, about four o'clock, he found Robinson pinned to the wall, jammed in the waistcoat, and griped in the collar. His blood ran cold at sight of him, for the man had been hours in the pillory, and nature was giving way.

"What has he done?"

"Refractory at crank."

"I saw him working at the crank when I came here last."

"Hasn't made his number good, though."

"Humph! You have the governor's own orders?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long is he to be so?"

"Till fresh orders."

"I will see the effect of this punishment on the prisoner, and note it down for my report." And he took out his note-book, and leaned his back against the wall.

The simple action of taking out a note-book gave the operators a certain qualm of doubt. Fry whispered Hodges to go and tell the governor. On his return, Hodges found the parties as he had left them, except Robinson—he was paler and his lips turning bluer.

"Your victim is fainting," said the chaplain sternly.

"Only shamming, sir," said Fry. "Bucket, Hodges."

The bucket was brought, and the contents were flung over Robinson.

The chaplain give a cry of dismay. The turnkeys both laughed at this.

"You see he was only shamming, sir," said Hodges. "He is come-to the moment the water touched him."

"A plain proof he was not shamming. A bucket of water thrown over anyone about to faint would always bring them to; but if a man had made up his mind to sham, he could do it in spite of water. Of course you will take him down now?"

"Not till fresh orders."

"On your peril be it if any harm befalls this prisoner—you are warned."

At this juncture Hawes came into the yard. His cheek was flushed and his eye glittered. He expected and rather hoped a collision with his reverence.

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, sir; only his reverence is threatening us."

"What is he threatening you for?"

"Mr. Hawes, I told these men that I should hold them responsible if any harm came to the prisoner for their cruelty. I now tell you that he has just fainted from bodily distress caused by this infernal engine, and I hold you, Mr. Hawes, responsible for this man's life and well-being, which are here attacked, contrary to the custom of all Her Majesty's prisons, and contrary to the intention of all punishment, which is for the culprit's good, not for his injury, either in soul or body."

"And what will you do?" said Hawes, glaring contemptuously at the turnkeys, who wore rather a blank look.

"Mr. Hawes," replied the other gravely, "I have spoken to warn you, not to threaten you."

"What I do is done with the consent of the visiting justices. They are my masters, and no one else."

"They have not seen a prisoner crucified."

"Crucified! What d'ye mean by crucified?"

"Don't you see that the torture before our eyes is crucifixion?"

"No; I don't. No nails!"

"Nails were not always used in crucifixion; sometimes cords. Don't deceive yourself with a name; nothing misleads like a false name. This punishment is falsely called

the jacket—it is jacket, collar, straps applied with cruelty. It is crucifixion minus nails, but plus a collar."

"Whatever it is, the justices have seen and approved it. Haven't they, Fry?"

"That they have, sir; scores of times."

"Then may Heaven forgive them and direct me." And the chaplain entered the cell despondently, and bent his pitying eye steadily on the thief, who seemed to him at the moment a better companion than the three honest but cruel men.

He waited there very, very sorrowful and thoughtful for more than half an hour. Then Hawes, who left the yard as soon as he had conquered his opponent, sent in Evans with an order to take Robinson to his dormitory.

The chaplain saw the man taken down from the wall, and that done, went hastily to his own house, there, the contest being over, he was seized with a violent sickness and trembling. To see a fellow-creature suffer, and not be able to relieve him, was death to this man. He was game to the last drop of his blood, so long as there was any good to be done; but, action ended, a reaction came, in which he was all pity and sorrow and distress, because of a fellow-creature's distress. No one that saw his firmness in the torture-cell would have guessed how weak he was within, and how stoutly his great heart had to battle against a sensitive nature and nerves tuned too high.

He gave half an hour to the weakness of nature, and then he was all duty once more.

He went first into Robinson's cell. He found him worse than ever: despair as well as hatred gleamed in his eye.

"My poor fellow, is there no way for you to avoid these dreadful punishments?"

No answer.

It is to be observed, though, that Robinson had no idea how far the chaplain had carried his remonstrance against his torture; that remonstrance had been uttered privately to the turnkeys and the governor. Besides, the man was half-stupefied when the chaplain first came there. And now he was in such pain and despair. He was like the genii confined in the chest and thrown into the water by Soliman. Had this good friend come to him at first starting, he would have thrown himself into his arms; but it came too late now: he hated all mankind. He had lost all belief in genuine kindness. Like Orlando—

"He thought that all things had been savage here."

The chaplain, on the other hand, began to think that Robinson was a downright brute, and one on whom kindness was and would be wasted. Still, true to his nature, he admitted no small pique; he reasoned gently and kindly with him—very kindly. "My poor soul," said he, "have you so many friends in this hard place that you can afford to repulse one who desires to be your friend, and to do you good?"

No answer.

"Well, then, if you will not let me comfort you, at least you cannot prevent my praying for you, for you are on the road to despair and will take no help."

So then this good creature did actually kneel upon the hard stones of the cell and offer a prayer—a very short but earnest one—

"O God, to whom all hearts are open, enlighten me that I may understand this, my afflicted brother's heart, and learn how to do him good, and comfort him out of Thy Word—Thy grace assisting me."

Robinson looked down at him with wild, staring, but lack-lustre eyes and open mouth. He rose from the floor, and casting a look of great benignity on the sullen brute, he was about to go, when he observed that Robinson was trembling in a very peculiar way.

"You are ill," said he hastily, and took a step towards him.

At this, Robinson, with a wild and furious gesture, waved him to the door and turned his face to the wall; then this refined gentleman bowed his head, as much as to say, you shall be master of this apartment and dismiss anyone you do not like, and went gently away with a little sigh. And the last that he saw was Robinson trembling with averted face and eyes bent down.

Outside he met Evans, who said to him half bluntly, half respectfully, "I don't like to see you going into that cell, sir; the man is not to be trusted. He is very strange."

"What do you mean? do you fear for his reason?"

"Why not, sir? We have sent a pretty many to the lunatic asylum since I was a warder here."

"Ah!"

"And some have broke prison a shorter way than that," said the man very gloomily.

The chaplain groaned and looked at the speaker with

an expression of terror. Evans noticed it and said gravely—

"You should not have come to such a place as this, sir; you are not fit for it."

"Why am I not fit for it?"

"Too good for it, sir."

"You talk foolishly, Mr. Evans. In the first place, 'too good' is a ludicrous combination of language; in the next, the worse a place is, the more need of somebody being good in it to make it better. But I suppose you are one of those who think that evil is naturally stronger than good. Delusion springs from this, that the wicked are in earnest and the good are lukewarm. Good is stronger than evil. A single really good man in an ill place is like a little yeast in a gallon of dough; it can leaven the mass. If St. Paul, or even George Whitfield, had been in Lot's place all those years, there would have been more than fifty good men in Sodom; but this is out of place. I want you to give me the benefit of your experience, Evans. When I went to Robinson and spoke kindly to him he trembled all over. What on earth does that mean?"

"Trembled, did he, and never spoke?"

"Yes!—Well?"

"I'm thinking, sir! I'm thinking. You didn't touch him?"

"Touch him, no; what should I touch him for?"

"Well, don't do it, sir. And don't go near him. You have had an escape, you have. He was in two minds about pitching into you."

"You think it was rage! Humph! it did not give me that impression."

"Sir, did you ever go to pat a strange dog?"

"I have done myself that honour."

"Well, if he wags his tail, you know it is all right; but say he puts his tail between his legs, what will he do if you pat him?"

"Bite me: *experto crede.*"

"No; if you are ever so expert, he will bite you or try. Now, putting of his tail between his legs, that passes for a sign of fear in a dog, all one as trembling does in a man. Do you see what I am driving at?"

"Yes."

"Then you had better leave the spiteful brute to himself."

"No; that would be to condemn him to the worst companion he can have."

"But if he should pitch into you, sir?"

"Then he shall pitch into a man twice as strong as himself, and a pupil of Bendigo. Don't be silly, Evans."

SUNDAY.

Hodges.—Pity you wasn't in chapel, Mr. Fry.

Fry.—Why?

Hodges.—The new chaplain!

Fry.—Well, what did he do?

Hodges.—He waked 'em all up, I can tell you. Governor couldn't get a wink all the sermon.

Fry.—What did he tell you?

Hodges.—Told us he loved us.

Fry.—Loved who?

Hodges.—All of us—governor, turnkeys, and especially the prisoners, because they were in trouble. "My Master loves you, though He hates your sin," says he; and "I love every mother's son of you." What d'ye think of that? He loves the whole biling! Told 'em so, however.

Fry.—Loves 'em, does he? Well, that's a new lay! After all, there's no accounting for tastes, you know. Haw! haw!

Hodges.—Haw! haw! ho!

This same Sunday afternoon, soon after service, the chaplain came to Robinson's cell. Evans unlocked it, looking rather uneasy, and would have come in with the reverend gentleman; but he forbade him, and walked quickly into the cell, as Van Amburgh goes among his leopards and panthers. He had in his hand a little box.

"I have brought you some ointment—some nice cooling ointment," said he, "to rub on your neck. I saw it was frayed by that collar."

(Pause.) No answer.

"Will you let me see you use it?"

No answer.

"Come!"

No answer.

The chaplain took the box off the table, opened it, and went up to Robinson, and began quietly to apply some of the grateful soothing ointment to his frayed throat. The man trembled all over. The chaplain kept his eye calm but firm upon him, as on a dog of doubtful temper. Robinson put up his hand in a feeble sort of way to prevent

the other from doing him good. His reverence took the said hand in a quiet but powerful grasp, and applied the ointment all the same. Robinson said nothing, but he was seized with this extraordinary trembling.

"Good-bye," said his reverence kindly. "I leave you the box; and see, here are some tracts I have selected for you. They are not dull; there are stories in them, and the dialogue is pretty good. It is nearer nature than you will find it in works of greater pretension. Here a carpenter talks something like a carpenter, and a footman something like a footman, and a factory-girl something like a girl employed in a factory. They don't all talk book—you will be able to read them. Begin with this one —'The Wages of Sin is Death.' Good-bye!" And with these words and a kind smile he left the cell.

"From the chaplain, sir," said Evans to the governor, touching his hat.

"DEAR SIR,—Will you be good enough to send me by the bearer a copy of the prison-rules, especially those that treat of the punishments to be inflicted on prisoners.—I am, yours, etc."

Hawes had no sooner read this innocent-looking missive, than he burst into a tide of execrations; he concluded by saying, "Tell him I have not got a spare copy; Mr. Jones will give him his."

This answer disappointed the chaplain sadly; for Mr. Jones had left the town, and was not expected to return for some days. The hostile spirit of the governor was evident in this reply. The chaplain felt he was at war, and his was an energetic but peace-loving nature. He paced the corridor, looking both thoughtful and sad. The rough Evans eyed him with interest, and he also fell into meditation and scratched his head, invariable concomitant of thought with Evans.

It was towards evening, and his reverence still paced the corridor, downhearted at opposition and wickedness, but not without hope, and full of lovely and charitable wishes for all his flock, when the melancholy Fry suddenly came out of a prisoner's cell radiant with joy.

"What is amiss?" asked the chaplain.

"This is the matter," said Fry, and he showed him a deuce of clubs, a five of hearts, and an ace of diamonds, and so on; two or three cards of each suit. "A prisoner has been making these out of his tracts."

"How could he do that?"

"Look here, sir. He has kept a little of his gruel till it turned to paste, and then he has pasted three or four leaves of the tracts together and dried them, and then cut them into cards."

"But the colours—how could he get them?"

"That is what beats me altogether; but some of these prisoners know more than the bench of bishops."

"More evil, I conclude you mean?"

"More of all sorts, sir. However, I am taking them to the governor, and he will fathom it if anyone can."

"Leave one red card and one black with me."

While Fry was gone, the chaplain examined the cards with curiosity and that admiration of inventive resource which a superior mind cannot help feeling. There they were, a fine red deuce of hearts and a fine black four of spades—cards made without pasteboard and painted without paint. But how? that was the question. The chaplain entered upon this question with his usual zeal; but happening to reverse one of the cards, it was his fate to see on the back of it—

"The Wages of Sin is Death."

A Tract.

He reddened at the sight. Here was an affront! "The sulky brute could amuse himself cutting up my tracts!"

Presently the governor came up with his satellites.

"Take No. 19 out of his cell for punishment."

At this word the chaplain's short-lived anger began to cool. They brought Robinson out.

"So you have been at it again," cried the governor in threatening terms. "Now you will tell me where you got the paint to make these beauties with?"

No answer.

"Do you hear, ye sulky brute?"

No answer, but a glittering eye bent on Hawes.

"Put him in the jacket," cried Hawes with an oath.

Hodges and Fry laid each a hand upon the man's shoulder and walked him off.

"Stop!" cried Hawes suddenly; "his reverence is here, and he is not partial to the jacket."

The chaplain was innocent enough to make a graceful grateful bow to Hawes.

"Give him the dark cell for twenty-four hours," continued Hawes, with a malicious grin.

The thief gave a cry of dismay, and shook himself clear of the turnkeys.

"Anything but that," cried he with trembling voice.

"Oh, you have found your tongue, have you?"

"Any punishment but that," almost shrieked the despairing man. "Leave me my reason. You have robbed me of everything else. For pity's sake, leave me my reason!"

The governor made a signal to the turnkeys; they stepped towards the thief. The thief sprung out of their way, his eye rolling wildly as if in search of escape. Seeing this, the two turnkeys darted at him, like bull-dogs, one on each side. This time, instead of flying, the thief was observed to move his body in a springy way to meet them; with two motions rapid as light and almost contemporaneous, he caught Hodges between the eyes with his fist, and drove his head like a battering-ram into Fry's belly. Smack! ooff! and the two powerful men went down like ninepins.

In a moment all the warders within sight or hearing came buzzing round, and Hodges and Fry got up, the latter bleeding; both staring confusedly. Seeing himself hemmed in, Robinson offered no further resistance. He plumped himself down on the ground and there sat, and they had to take him up and carry him to the dark cells. But as they were dragging him along by the shoulders, he caught sight of the governor and chaplain looking down at him over the rails of Corridor B. At sight of the latter the thief wrenched himself free from his attendants, and screamed to him—

"Do you see this, you in the black coat? You that told us the other day you loved us, and now stand coolly there and see me taken to the black-hole to be got ready for the mad-house? D'ye hear?"

"I hear you," replied the chaplain gravely and gently.

"You called us your brothers, you."

"I did, and do."

"Well then, here is one of your brothers being taken to hell before your eyes. I go there a man, but I shall come out a beast, and that cowardly murderer by your side knows it, and you have not a word to say. That is all a poor fellow gets by being your brother. My curse on you all! butchers and hypocrites!"

"Give him twelve hours more for that," roared Hawes. "—— his eyes, I'll break him, —— him."

"Ah!" yelled the thief, "you curse me, do you? d'ye hear that? The son of a —— appeals to Heaven against me! What? does this lump of dirt believe there is a God? Then there must be one." Then suddenly flinging himself on his knees, he cried, "If there is a God who pities them that suffer, I cry to Him on my knees to torture you as you torture us. May your name be shame, may your life be pain, and your death loathsome! may your skin rot from your flesh, your flesh from your bones, your bones from your body, and your soul split for ever on the rock of damnation."

"Take him away," yelled Hawes, white as a sheet.

They tore him away by force, still threatening his persecutor with outstretched hand and raging voice and blazing eyes, and flung him into the dark dungeon.

"Cool yourself there, ye varmint," said Fry spitefully. Even his flesh crept at the man's blasphemies.

Meantime, the chaplain had buried his face in his hands, and trembled like a woman at the frightful blasphemies and passions of these two sinners.

"I'll make this place hell to him. He shan't need to go elsewhere," muttered Hawes aloud between his clenched teeth.

The chaplain groaned.

The governor heard him and turned on him: "Well, parson, you see he doesn't thank you for interfering between him and me. He would rather have had an hour or two of the jacket and have done with it."

The chaplain sighed. He felt weighed down in spirit by the wickedness both of Hawes and of Robinson. He saw it was in vain at that moment to try to soften the former in favour of the latter. He moved slowly away. Hawes eyed him sneeringly.

"He is down upon his luck," thought Hawes; "his own fault for interfering with me. I liked the man well enough, and showed it, if he hadn't been a fool and put his nose into my business."

Half an hour had scarce elapsed when the chaplain came back.

"Mr. Hawes, I come to you as a petitioner."

"Indeed!" said Hawes, with a supercilious sneer very hard to bear.

The other would not notice it. "Pray do not think I side with a refractory prisoner if I beg you, not to countermand, but to modify Robinson's punishment."

"What for?"

"Because he cannot bear so many hours of the dark cell."

"Nonsense, sir."

"Is it too much to ask that you will give him six hours a day for four days, instead of twenty-four at a stretch?"

"I don't know whether it is too much for you to ask. I should say by what I see of you that nothing is; but it is too much for me to grant. The man has earned punishment; he has got it, and you have nothing to do with it at all."

"Yes, I have the care of his soul, and how can I do his soul good if he loses his reason?"

"Stuff! his reason's safe enough, what little he has."

"Do not say stuff! Do not be rash where the stake is so great, or confident where you have no knowledge. You have never been in the dark cell, Mr. Hawes; I have; and I assure you it tried my nerves to the uttermost. I had many advantages over this poor man. I went in of my own accord, animated by a desire of knowledge, supported by the consciousness of right, my memory enriched by the reading of five-and-twenty years, on which I could draw in the absence of external objects; yet so dreadful was the place that had I not been fortified by communion with my omnipresent God, I do think my reason would have suffered in that thick darkness and solitude. I repeated thousands of lines of Homer, Virgil, and the Greek dramatists; then I came to Shakespeare, Corneille, Racine, and Victor Hugo; then I tried to think of a text and compose a sermon; but the minutes seemed hours, leaden hours, and they weighed my head down and my heart down, and so did the Egyptian darkness, till I sought refuge in prayer, and there I found it."

"You pulled through it, and so will he; and now I think of it, it is too slight a punishment to give a refractory, blaspheming villain no worse than a pious gentleman took on him for sport," sneered Hawes. "You heard his language to me, the blaspheming dog?"

"I did! I did! and therefore pray you to pity his sinful soul, exasperated by the severities he has already undergone. Oh, sir! the wicked are more to be pitied than the good; and the good can endure trials that wreck the

wicked. I would rather see a righteous man thrown into that dismal dungeon than this poor blaspheming sinner."

"The deuce you would!"

"For the righteous man has a strong tower that the sinner lacks. He is fit to battle with solitude and fearful darkness; an unseen light shines upon his soul, an unseen hand sustains him. The darkness is no darkness to him, for the Sun of righteousness is nigh. In the deep solitude he is not alone, for good angels whisper by his side. 'Yea, though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet shall he fear no evil, for God is with him; His rod and His staff they comfort him.' The wicked have not this comfort: to them darkness and solitude must be too horrible. Satan—not God—is their companion. The ghosts of their past crimes rise and swell the present horror. Remorse and despair are added to the double gloom of solitude and darkness. You don't know what you are doing when you shut up a poor lost sinner of excitable temperament in that dreadful hole. It is a wild experiment on a human frame. Pray be advised, pray be warned, pray let your heart be softened, and punish the man as he deserves—but do not destroy him! oh, do not! do not destroy him!"

Up to this moment Hawes had worn a quiet, malicious grin. At last his rage broke through this veil. He turned round black as night upon the chaplain, who was bending towards him in earnest, gasping, yet sweet and gentle supplication.

"The vagabond insulted me before all my servants, and that is why you take his part. He would send me to hell if he had the upper hand. I've got the upper hand, and so he shall taste it instead of me, till he goes down on his marrow-bones to me with my foot on his viper's tongue, —— him!"

"Oh, do not curse him, above all, now that he is in trouble and defenceless."

"Let me alone, sir, and I'll let you," retorted Hawes savagely. "If I curse him, you can pray for him. I don't hinder you. Good-night!" and Mr. Hawes turned his back very rudely.

"I will pray for him—and for you!"

"Ugh!"

So then the chaplain retired sorrowfully to his private

room, and here, sustained no longer by action, his high-tuned nature gave way. A cold languor came over him. He locked the door that no one might see his weakness, and then succumbing to nature, he fell first into a sickness and then into a trembling, and more than once hysterical tears gushed from his eyes in the temporary prostration of his spirit and his powers.

Such are the great. Men know their feats, but not their struggles.

Meantime Robinson lay in the dark cell with a morsel of bread and water, and no bed or chair, that hunger and unrest might co-operate with darkness and solitude to his hurt. To this horrid abode it is now our fate to follow a thief and a blasphemer. We must pass his gloomy portal, over which might have been inscribed what Dante has written over the gates of hell—

"ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE—ABANDON HOPE!!"

At six o'clock Robinson was thrust in, and his pittance of bread and water with him; the door, which fitted like mosaic, was closed. The steps retreated, carrying away hope and human kind; there was silence, and the man shivered in the thick black air that seemed a fluid, not an atmosphere.

When the door closed, his heart was yet beating with rage and wild desire of vengeance. He nursed this rage as long as he could, but the thick darkness soon cooled him and cowed him. He sat down upon the floor, he ate his pittance very slowly, two mouthfuls a minute. "I will be an hour eating it," said he, "and then an hour will have passed." He thought he was an hour eating it, but in reality he was scarce twenty minutes. The blackness seemed to smother him. "I will shut it out," said he. He took out his handkerchief and wrapped his head in it. "What a weak fool I am!" cried he; "when we are asleep it does not matter to us light or dark; I will go to sleep." He lay down, his head still wrapped up, and tried to sleep. So passed the first hour.

Second hour.—He rose from the stone floor after a vain attempt to sleep. "Oh no!" cried he, "sleep is for those who are well and happy, and who could enjoy themselves as well awake; it won't come to me to save a poor wretch from despair. I must tire myself, and I am too cold to

sleep: here goes for a warm." He groped to the wall, and' keeping his hand on it, went round and round like a caged tiger. "Hawes hopes to drive me to Bedlam. I'll do the best I can for myself to spite him. May he lie in a place narrower than this, and almost as dark, with his jaw down and his toes up, before the year is out, curse him!" But the poor wretch's curses quavered away into sobs and tears. "Oh! what have I done to be used so as I am here? They drive me to despair, then drive me to hell for despairing. Patience, or I shall go mad. Patience! Patience!" This hour was passed cursing and weeping, and groping for warmth, and fatigue—in vain.

Third hour.—The man sat rocking himself to and fro, trying not to think of anything: for now the past too was coming with all its weight upon him; every minute he started up as if an adder had stung him; crawled about his cell seeking refuge in motion, and finding none; then he threw himself on the floor and struggled for sleep. Sleep would not come so sought; and now his spirits were quite cowed. He would cringe to Hawes; he would lick the dust at his feet to get out of this horrible place; who could he get to go and tell the governor he was *penitent*. He listened at the door; he rapped; no one came. He put his ear to the ground and listened; no sound—blackness, silence, solitude. "They have left me here to die," shrieked the despairing man, and he flung himself on the floor and writhed upon the hard stone. "It must be morning, and no one comes near me: this is my tomb!" Fear came upon him and trembling, and a cold sweat bedewed his limbs; and once more the past rushed over him with tenfold force—days of happiness and comparative innocence now forfeited for ever. His whole life whirled round before his eyes in a panorama, scene dissolving into scene with inconceivable rapidity. Thus passed more than two hours; and now remorse and memory concentrated themselves on one dark spot in this man's history. "She is in the tomb," cried he, "and all through me, and that is why I am here. This is my grave. Do you see me, Mary?—she is here. The spirits of the dead can go anywhere." Then he trembled and cried for help. Oh for a human voice or a human footstep!—none. His nerves and senses were now shaken. He cried aloud most piteously for help. "Mr. Fry, Mr. Hodges; help! help! help! The cell is full of the dead, and devils are buzzing round me waiting to carry me

away—they won't wait much longer." He fancied something supernatural passed him, like a wind; he struck wildly at it. He flung himself madly against the door to escape it; he fell back bruised and bleeding, and lay a while in stupor.

Sixth hour.—Robinson was going mad. The blackness and solitude and silence and remorse and despair were more than his excitable nature could bear any longer. He prayed Hawes to come and abuse him. He prayed Fry to bring the jacket to him. "Let me but see a man, or hear a man!" He screamed, and cursed, and prayed, and dashed himself on the ground, and ran round the cell wounding his hands and his face. Suddenly he turned deadly calm. He saw he was going mad—better die than so—"I shall be a beast soon—I will die a man." He tore down his collar—he had on cotton stockings, he took one off—he tied it in a loose knot round his naked throat—he took a firm hold with each hand.

And now he was quiet, and sorrowed calmly. A man to die in the prime of life for want of a little light and a word from a human creature to keep him from madness.

Then as the thought returned, clenching his teeth, he gathered the ends of the stocking and prepared with one fierce pull to save his shaken reason and end his miserable days. Now at this awful moment, while his hands gripped convulsively the means of death, a quiet tap on the outside of the cell door suddenly ran through the dead stillness, and a moment after a human word forced its way into the cave of madness and death—

"BROTHER!"

When this strange word pierced the thick door, and came into the hell-cave feeble as though wafted over water from a distance, yet distinct as a bell and bright as a sunbeam, Robinson started, and quaked with fear and doubt. Did it come from the grave, that unearthly tone and word?

Still holding the ends of the stocking, he cried out wildly in a loud but quavering voice—

"Who—o—o—calls Thomas Sinclair 'brother'?" The distant voice rang back—

"Francis Eden!"

"Ah!—where are you, Francis Eden?"

"Here! within a hand's-breadth of you;" and Mr. Eden struck the door. "Here!"

"There! are you there?" and Robinson struck the door on his side.

"Yes, here!"

"Ha! don't go away, pray don't go away!"

"I don't mean to;—take courage—calm your fears—a brother is close by you!"

"A brother!—again! now I know who it must be, but there is no telling voices here."

"What were you doing?"

"What was I doing? Oh! don't ask me—I was going mad—where are you?"

"Here!" (rap).

"And I am here close opposite; you won't go away yet awhile?"

"Not till you bid me. Compose yourself—do you hear me?--calm yourself, compose yourself."

"I will try, sir!—thank you, sir—I will try. What o'clock is it?"

"Half-past twelve."

"Night or day?"

"Night."

"Friday night or Saturday?"

"Thursday."

"How came you to be in the prison at this hour?"

"I was anxious about you."

"You were what?"

"Fearful about you."

"What! did you give up your sleep only to see after me?"

"Are you not glad I came?"

"Is a shipwrecked sailor glad when a rope is flung him? I hold on to life and reason by you!"

"Is not this better than sleeping?—Did you speak?"

"No! I am thinking! I am trying to make you out. Were you ever a p—— (hum)?"

"Was I ever what?—the door is so thick!"

"Oh, nothing, sir; you seem to know what a poor fellow suffers in the dark cell."

"I have been in it!"

"Whee-ugh-wheet! what a shame! What did they put you in for!"

"They didn't put me in—I went in."

"The devil you did!" muttered the immured.

"What? speak out."

"Nothing, your reverence," bawled Robinson. "Why did you go into such a cur—into such a hole?"

"It was my duty to know what a fellow-creature suffers there, lest, through inexperience, I might be cruel. Ignorance is the mother of cruelty!"

"I hear you, sir."

"And cruelty is a fearful crime in His eyes whose servant I am."

"I am thinking, sir; I am putting two or three things together—I see——"

"Speak more slowly and articulately."

"I will; I see what you are now—you are a Christian."

"I hope so!"

"I might have guessed as much, and I did suspect it; but I couldn't know, I had nothing to go by. I never fell in with a Christian before."

"Where did you go to look for them?" asked Mr. Eden, his mouth twitching.

"I have been in many countries, and my eyes open; and I've heard and read of Christians, and I've met hypocrites: but never met a living Christian till to-night;" then, after a pause, "Sir, I want to apologise to you!"

"What for?"

"For my ignorant and ungrateful conduct to you in my cell."

"Let bygones be bygones!"

"Could you forgive me, sir?"

"You punished yourself, not me; I forgive you."

"Thank you."

Robinson was silent.

After a pause, Mr. Eden tapped.

"What are you doing?"

"I am thinking over your goodness to me."

"Are you better now?"

"That I am. The place was a tomb; since you came it is only a closet. I can't see your face—I feel it, though; and your voice is music to me. Have you nothing to say to me, sir?"

"I have many things to say to you; but this is not the time. I want you to sleep."

"Why, sir?"

"Sleep is the balm of mind and body; you need sleep."

"And you, sir?"

"I shall sit here."

"You will take your death of cold."

"No, I have my greatcoat."

There was a long pause.

Robinson tapped. "Sir, grant me a favour."

"What is it?"

"Go home to your bed."

"What! leave you?"

"Yes."

"Shall you not miss me?"

"Yes, sir, but you must go. The words you have spoken will stay with me while you are gone."

"I shall stay."

"No, sir, no! I can't bear it—it isn't fair!"

"What do you mean?"

"It isn't fair that a gentleman like you should be kept shivering at an unfortunate man's door like me. I am not quite good for nothing, sir, and this will disgrace me in my own eyes."

"I am on the best side of the door; don't trouble your head about me."

"I shouldn't, sir, if you had not about me—but kindness begets kindness;—go to your comfortable bed."

Mr. Eden hesitated.

"You will make me more unhappy than I am, if you stay here in the cold."

Now at the beginning of this argument Mr. Eden was determined not to go; but on reflection he made up his mind to, for this reason: "This," said he to himself, "is an act of uncommon virtue and self-denial in this poor fellow. I must not balk it, for it will be good for his soul; it is a step on the right road. This good, and I might say noble, act is a foundation-stone on which I ought to try and build an honest man and a Christian."

"Well, then, as you are so considerate, I will go."

"Thank you."

"Can I do nothing for you before I go?"

"No, sir; you have done all a man can; yes, you can do something—you spoke a word to me when you came; it is a word I am not worthy of, but still if you could leave me that word it would be a companion for me."

"Brother!"

"Thank you."

When he heard Mr. Eden's steps grow fainter and fainter, and at last inaudible, Robinson groaned; the

darkness turned blacker, and the solitude more desolate than ever.

Mr. Eden paced the corridors in meditation. "It is never too late to mend!" he said. "This man seemed an unredeemable brute: yet his heart was to be touched by persevering kindness; and once touched, how much of goodness left in his fallen nature—genuine gratitude, and even the embers of self-respect. 'I hate myself for my conduct in the cell; it would disgrace me in my own eyes if I let you shiver at my door.' Poor fellow, my heart yearns towards him for that. 'Go, or you will make me more unhappy.' Why, that was real delicacy. I must not let him suffer for it. In an hour I will go back to him. If he is asleep, well and good; if not, there I stay till morning."

He went to his room and worked; the hour soon glided by to him, not so to the poor prisoner. At two in the morning Mr. Eden came softly back to the dark cell to see whether Robinson was asleep He scratched the door with a key. A loud, unsteady voice cried out, "What is that?"

"It is I, brother."

"Why are you not in your bed?"

"I couldn't sleep for anxiety. Come, chat with me till you feel sleepy. How did you colour those cards?"

"I found a coal and a bit of brick in the yard. I pounded them and mixed them with water, and laid them on with a brush I had made and hid."

"Very ingenious! Are you cold?"

"No."

"Because your voice trembles."

"Does it?"

"What is the matter?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No! But I remember you used to tremble when I spoke to you in the cell. Why was that? Have your nerves been shaken by ill-usage, my poor fellow?"

"Oh no! it is not that."

"Tell me, then!"

"Oh, sir! you know all a poor fellow feels. You can guess what made me tremble, and makes me tremble now, like an aspen I do."

"No, indeed! pray tell me. Are we not friends?"

"The best ever I had, or ever shall."

"Then tell me."

"I'll try; but it is a long story, and the door is so thick."

"Ah! but I hear you better now; I have got used to your voice."

"Well, sir; but I've no words to speak to you as I ought. Why did I use to tremble when you used to speak kind to me? Sir, when I first came here, I hadn't a bad heart. I was a felon, but I was a man. They turned me to a brute by cruelty and wrong. You came too late, sir. It wasn't Tom Robinson you found in that cell. I had got to think all men were devils. They poisoned my soul! I hated God and man!

"The very chaplain before you said good kind words in church, but out of it he was Hawes' tool. Then you came and spoke good kind words. My heart ran to meet them; then it drew back all shivering, and said, 'This is a hypocrite too!' I was a fool and a villain to think so for a moment, and perhaps I didn't at bottom, but I was turned to gall.

"Oh, sir! you don't know what it is to lose hope—to find out that, do what you will, you can't be right, can't escape abuse and hatred and torture. Treat a man like a dog and you make him one!

"But you came: your voice, your face, your eye, were all pity and kindness. I hoped, but I was afraid to hope! I had seen but two things—butchers and hypocrites. Then I had sworn in my despair never to speak again, and I wouldn't speak to you. Fool!—How kind and patient you were. Sir, once when you left me you sighed as you closed the cell door. I came after you to beg your pardon when it was too late; indeed I did, upon my honour. And when you would rub the ointment on my throat in spite of my ingratitude, I could have worshipped you, but my pride held me back like an iron hand. Why did I tremble? That was the devil and my better part fighting inside me for the upper hand. And another thing, I did not dare speak to you; I felt that, if I did, I should give way altogether, like a woman or a child; I feel so now. For, oh! can't you guess what it must be to a poor fellow when all the rest are savage as wolves, and one is kind as a woman? Oh, you have been a friend to me. You don't know all you have done; you have saved my life. When you came here, a stocking was knotted round my

throat, a minute later the man you call your brother—God bless you!—would have been no more. There, I never meant you should know that, and now it has slipped out. My benefactor! my kind friend! my angel! for you are an angel and not a man. What can I do to show you what I feel? What can I say? There, I tremble all over now, as I did then. I'm choking for words, and the cruel, thick door keeps me from you. I want to put my neck under your foot, for I can't speak. All I say isn't worth a button. Words! words! words! give me words that mean something. They shan't keep me from you, they shan't! they shan't! My stubborn heart was between us once, now there is only a door. Give me your hand!—give me your hand before my heart bursts."

"There! there!"

"Hold it there!"

"Yes! yes!"

"My lips are here close opposite it. I am kissing your dear hand. There! there! there! I bless you! I love you! I adore you! I am kissing your hand, and I am on my knees blessing you and kissing. Oh, my heart! my heart! my heart!"

There was a long silence, disturbed only by sobs that broke upon the night from the black cell. Mr. Eden leaned against the door with his hand in the same place: the prisoner kissed the spot from time to time.

"Your reverence is crying too!" was the first word spoken, very gently.

"How do you know?"

"You don't speak, and my heart tells me you are shedding a tear for me; there was only that left to do for me."

Then there was another silence, and true it was that the good man and the bad man mingled some tears through the massy door. These two hearts pierced it, and went to and fro through it, and melted in spite of it, and defied and utterly defeated it.

"Did you speak, dear sir?"

"No; not for the world. Weep on, my poor sinning, suffering brother. Heaven sends you this blessed rain; let it drop quietly on your parched soul, refresh you, and shed peace on your troubled heart. Drop gentle dew from heaven upon his spirit; prepare the dry soil for the good seed."

And so the bad man wept abundantly; to him old long-dried sources of tender feeling were now unlocked by Christian love and pity.

The good man shed a gentle tear or two of sympathy; of sorrow too, to find so much goodness had been shut up, driven in, and well-nigh quenched for ever in the poor thief.

To both, these holy drops were as the dew of Hermon on their souls.

"O lacrymarum fons tenero sacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo; quater
Felix in imo qui scatentem
Pectore te pia Nympha sensit."

Robinson was the first to break silence.

"Go home, sir, now; you have done your work, you have saved me. I feel at peace. I could sleep. You need not fear to leave me now."

"I shall sit here until you are asleep, and then I will go. Do you hear this?" and he scratched the door with his key.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, when I do so and you do not tap in reply, I shall know you are asleep."

Robinson, whose heart was now so calmed, felt his eyes get heavier and heavier. After a while he spoke to Mr. Eden, but received no reply.

"Perhaps he is dozing," thought Robinson. "I won't disturb him."

Then he composed himself, lying close to the door to be near his friend.

After a while Mr. Eden scratched the door with his key. There was no answer; then he rose softly and went to his own room.

Robinson slept. Slept like an infant after this feverish day. His body lay still in a hole dark and almost as narrow as the grave, but his spirit had broken prison. Tired nature's sweet restorer descended like a dove upon his wet eyelids, and fanned him with her downy wings, and bedewed the hot heart and smarting limbs with her soothing, vivifying balm.

At six o'clock Evans went and opened Robinson's cell door. He was on the ground sleeping, with a placid smile on his face. Evans looked down at him with a puzzled air. Whilst contemplating him he was joined by Fry.

"Ugh!" grunted that worthy, "seems to agree with him." And he went off and told Hawes.

Directly after chapel, which he was not allowed to attend, came an order to take Robinson out of the dark cell and put him on the crank.

The disciplinarian, defeated in his attempt on Robinson, was compensated by a rare stroke of good fortune—a case of real refractoriness. Even this was not perfect, but it answered every purpose.

In one of the labour cells they found a prisoner seated with the utmost coolness across the handle of his crank. He welcomed his visitants with a smile, and volunteered a piece of information—"It is all right."

Now it couldn't be all right, for it was impossible he could have done his work in the time. Hawes looked at the face of the crank to see how much had been done, and lo! the face was broken and the index had disappeared. As Mr. Hawes examined the face of the crank, the prisoner leered at him with a mighty silly cunning.

This personage's name was Carter; it may be as well to explain him. Go into any large English jail on any day in any year you like, you shall find there two or three prisoners who have no business to be in such a place at all—half-witted, half-responsible creatures, missent to jail by shallow judges, contentedly executing those shallow laws they ought to modify and stigmatise until civilisation shall come and correct them.

These imbeciles, if the nation itself was not both half-witted and a thoughtless, ignorant dunce in all matters relating to such a trifle (Heaven forgive us!) as its prisons, would be taken to the light, not plunged into darkness; would not be shut up alone with their no-minds to accumulate the stupidity that has undone them, but forced into collision with better understandings; would not be closeted in a jail, but in a mild asylum with a school attached.

The offences of these creatures is seldom theft, hardly ever violence. This idiot was sentenced to two years' separate confinement for being the handle with which two knaves had passed base coin. The same day, the same tribunal sentenced a scoundrel who was not an idiot, and had beaten and kicked his wife to the edge of the grave—to fourteen years' imprisonment?—no, to four months!

Mr. Carter had observed that Fry looked at a long iron

needle on the face of the crank, and that when he had been lazy, somehow this needle pointed out the fact to Fry. He could not understand it, but then the world was brimful of things he could not understand one bit. It was no use standing idle till he could comprehend *rerum naturam*—bother it! In short, Mr. Carter did what is a dangerous thing for people in his condition to do, he cogitated, and the result of this unfamiliar process was that he broke the glass of the crank face, took out the index, shied the pieces of glass carefully over the wall, secreted the needle, took about ten turns of the crank, and then left off and sat down exulting secretly.

When they came as usual and went to consult the accusing needle, he chuckled and leered with foolish cunning. But his chuckle died away into a most doleful quaver when he found himself surrounded, jacketed, strapped, and collared. He struggled furiously at first, like some wild animal in a net; and when resistance was hopeless the poor half-witted creature lifted up his voice, and uttered loud wild-beast cries of pain and terror that rang through the vast prison.

These horrible cries brought all the warders to the spot, and Mr. Eden. There he found Carter howling, and Hawes in front of him, cursing and threatening him with destruction if he did not hold his noise.

He might as well have suspended a dog from a branch by the hind-leg, and told him he mustn't howl.

This sight drove a knife through Mr. Eden's heart. He stood amongst them white as a sheet. He could not speak, but his pale face was a silent protest against this enormity. His look of horror and righteous indignation chilled and made uneasy the inquisitors, all but Hawes.

"Hold your noise, ye howling brute, or I'll——" and he clapped his hand before Carter's mouth.

Carter seized his thumb with his teeth, and bit it to the bone. Hawes yelled with pain, and strove furiously to get his hand away, but Carter held it like a tiger. Hawes capered with agony, and yelled again. The first to come to his relief was Mr. Eden. He was at the biped's side in a moment, and pinched his nose. Now as his lungs were puffing like a blacksmith's bellows, his mouth flew open the moment the other breathing-hole was stopped, and Hawes got his bleeding hand away.

He held it with the other and shook it, and moaned

dismally, like a great girl; but suddenly looking up he saw a half grin upon the faces of his myrmidons.

For the contrast of a man telling another who was in pain not to make a row, and the next moment making an abominable row himself for no better reason, was funny.

For all this occurred ten times quicker in action than in relation.

Mr. Hawes' conversion to noise came rapidly in a single sentence after this fashion.

"—— you! hold your infernal noise. Oh! Augh! Ah! E E! E E! Aah! Oh! Oh! E E! E E! O O! O O! O O! O O! O O! O O!"

So Fry and Hodges and Evans and Davis grinned.

For all these men had learned from Hawes to laugh at pain—(another's). One man alone did not even smile. He was an observer, and did not expect anyone to be great at bearing pain who was rash in inflicting it; moreover, he suffered with all who suffer. He was sorry for the pilloried biped, and sorry for the bitten brute.

He then gave them another lesson. "All you want the poor thing to do is to suffer in silence. Withdraw twenty yards from him." He set the example by retreating; the others, Hawes included, being off their guard, obeyed mechanically the superior spirit.

Carter's cries died away into a whimpering moan. The turnkeys looked at one another, and with a sort of commencement of respect at Mr. Eden.

"Parson knows more than we do."

Hawes interrupted this savagely.

"Ye fools! couldn't you see it was the sight of your ugly faces made him roar, not the jacket? Keep him there till further orders;" and he went off to plaister his wounded hand.

Mr. Eden sat down and covered his face. He was as miserable as this vile world can make a man who lives for a better. The good work he was upon was so difficult in itself, and those who ought to have helped fought against him.

When with intelligence, pain, and labour, he had built up a little good, Hawes was sure to come and knock it down again; and this was the way to break his heart.

He had been taking such pains with this poor biped; he had played round his feeble understanding to find by what door a little wisdom and goodness could be made to enter

him. At last he had found that pictures pleased him and excited him, and awakened all the intelligence he had.

Mr. Eden had a vast collection of engravings and photographs. His plan with Carter was to show him some engraving presenting a fact or anecdote. First he would put under his eyes a cruel or unjust action. He would point out the signs of suffering in one of the figures. Carter would understand this, because he saw it. Then Mr. Eden would excite his sympathy. "Poor so and so!" would Mr. Eden say in a pitying voice. "Poor so and so!" would biped Carter echo. After several easy lessons he would find him a picture of some more moderate injustice, and so raise the shadow of a difficulty, and draw a little upon Carter's understanding as well as sympathy. Then would come pictures of charity, of benevolence, and other good actions. These and their effects upon the several figures Carter was invited to admire, and so on to a score of topics. The first thing was to make Carter think and talk, which he did in the happy-go-lucky way of his class, uttering nine mighty simple remarks, and then a bit of superlative wisdom, or something that sounded like it. And when he had shot his random bolts, Mr. Eden would begin, and treat each picture as a text, and utter much wisdom on it in simple words.

He found Carter's mind in a state of actual lethargy. He got it out of that; he created an excitement and kept it up. He got at his little bit of mind through his senses. Honour to all the great arts! The limit to their beauty and their usefulness has never yet been found, and never will. Painting was the golden key this thinker held to the Bramah lock of an imbecile's understanding—the ponderous wards were beginning to revolve—when a blockhead came and did his best to hamper the lock.

In English, Eden was gradually making the biped a man: comes Hawes and turns him to a brute. The whimpering moans of Carter were thoroughly animal, and the poor biped's degradation as well as his suffering made Mr. Eden wretched.

To-day for the first time—the chaplain saw a prisoner crucified, without suffering that peculiar physical weakness which I have more than once noticed. Poor soul! he was so pleased at this that he thanked Heaven for curing

him of that contemptible infirmity, so he called it. But he had to pay for this victory: he never felt so sick at heart as now. He turned for relief to the duties he had in his zeal added to a chaplain's acknowledged routine: he visited his rooms and all his rational workpeople.

The sight of all the good he was doing by teaching the sweets of anti-theft was almost a cordial to him.

Almost the last cell he visited was Thomas Robinson's. The man had been fretting and worrying himself to know why he did not come before. As soon as the door was opened he took an eager step to meet him, then stopped irresolutely, and blushed and beamed with pleasure mixed with a certain confusion. He looked volumes, but waited out of respect for his reverence to address him.

Mr. Eden held out his hand to him with a frank manner and kind smile. At this Robinson tried to speak, but could only stammer: something seemed to rise in his throat and block up the exit of words.

"Come," said Mr. Eden, "no more of that; be composed, and I will sit down, for I am tired."

Robinson brought him his stool, and Mr. Eden sat down.

They conversed, and after some kind inquiries, Mr. Eden came to the grand purport of this visit, which, to the surprise and annoyance of Robinson, was to reprobate severely the curses and blasphemies he had uttered as they were dragging him to the dark cell. And so threatening and severe was Mr. Eden, that at last poor Robinson whined out—

"Sir, you will make me wish I was in the dark cell again, for then you took my part; now you are against me."

"There is a time for everything under the sun. When you were in the dark cell, consolation and indulgence were the best things for your soul, and I gave them you as well as I could. You are not in the dark cell now, and out of the same love for you I tell you that if God took you this night, the curses you uttered yesterday would destroy you to all eternity."

"I hope not, your reverence."

"Away with delusive hopes: they war against the soul. I tell you those curses that came from a tongue set on fire of hell have placed you under the ban of Heaven. Are you not this Hawes' brother, his brother every way—two unforgiven sinners?"

"Yes, sir," said Robinson, truckling; "of course I know I am a great sinner, a desperate sinner, not worthy to be in your reverence's company. But I hope," he added with sudden sincerity and spirit, "you don't think I am such an out-and-out scoundrel as that Hawes."

"Mr. Hawes would tell me you are the scoundrel, and he a zealous servant of morality and order; but these comparisons are out of place. I am now deferring, not to the world's judgment, but to a higher, in whose eye Mr. Hawes and you stand on a level—two unforgiven sinners; if not forgiven you will both perish everlastingly, and to be forgiven you must forgive. God is very forgiving—He forgives the best of us a thousand vile offences. But He never forgives unconditionally. His terms are our repentance and our forgiveness of those who offend us one-millionth part as deeply as we offend Him. Therefore in praying against Hawes you have prayed against yourself. Give me your slate—no, take it yourself. Write——"

Robinson took his pencil with alacrity. He wrote a beautiful hand, and wanted to show off this accomplishment to his reverence.

"'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'"

"It is down, sir."

"Now particularise."

"Particularise, your reverence?"

"Write under 'us' 'our' and 'we,' 'me' 'my' and 'I,' respectively."

"All right, sir."

"Now, under 'them' write 'Mr. Hawes.'"

"Ugh! Yes, your reverence, 'Mr. Hawes.'"

"And under the last four words write, 'his cruelty to me.'"

This was wormwood to Mr. Robinson. "'His cruelty to me.'"

"Now read your work out."

"'Forgive me my sins as I forgive Mr. Hawes his cruelty to me.'"

"Now ponder over those words. Keep them before your eye here, and try at least and bow your stubborn heart to them. Fall on them and be broken, or they will fall on you and grind you to powder." He concluded in a terrible tone: then, seeing Robinson abashed, more from a notion he was in a rage with him than from any deeper sentiment, he bade him farewell kindly as ever.

"I know," said he, "I have given you a hard task. We can all gabble the Lord's Prayer, but how few have ever prayed it! But at least try, my poor soul, and I will set you an example. I will pray for my brother Robinson and my brother Hawes, and I shall pray for them all the more warmly, that at present one is a blaspheming thief and the other a pitiless blockhead."

The next day being Sunday, Mr. Eden preached two sermons that many will remember all their lives. The first was against theft and all the shades of dishonesty. I give a few of his topics: the dry bones he covered with flesh and blood and beauty. The tendency of theft was to destroy all moral and social good; for were it once to prevail so far as to make property insecure, industry would lose heart, enterprise and frugality be crushed, and at last the honest turn thieves in self-defence. Nearly every act of theft had a baneful influence on the person robbed.

Here he quoted by name instances of industrious, frugal persons, whose savings having been stolen, they had lost courage and good habits of years' standing, and had ended ill. Then he gave them a simile. These great crimes are like great trunk railways. They create many smaller ones: some flow into them: some out of them. Drunkenness generally precedes an act of theft: drunkenness always follows it; lies flow from it in streams, and perjury rushes to its defence.

It breeds, too, other vices that punish it, but never cure it—prodigality and general loose living. The thief is never the richer by this vile act which impoverishes his victim; for the money obtained by this crime is wasted in others. The folly of theft; its ill economy. What high qualities are laid out to their greatest disadvantage by the thief? —acuteness, watchfulness, sagacity, determination, tact. These virtues, coupled with integrity, enrich thousands every year. How many thieves do they enrich? How many thieves are a shilling a year the better for the hundreds of pounds that come dishonestly into their hands?

"In —— jail (Mr. Lepel's), there is now a family that have stolen, first and last, property worth eighteen thousand pounds. The entire possessions of this family are now two pair of shoes. The clothes they stand in belong to Government; their own had to be burned, so foul were they. Eighteen thousand pounds had they stolen—to be beggars;

and this is the rule, not the exception, as you all know. Why is this your fate and your end? Because a mightier power than man's has determined that thieving shall not thrive. The curse of God is upon theft!"

Then came life-like pictures of the honest man and the thief. The one with an eye that faced you with a conscious dignity, and often a cheerful countenance; the other with a shrinking eye, a conscious meanness, and never with a smile from the heart; sordid, sly, and unhappy—for theft is misery. No wonder this crime degrades a man when it degrades the very animals. Look at a dog who has stolen. Before this, when he met his master or any human friend, he used to run up to greet them with wagging tail and sparkling eye. Now see him: at sight of any man he crawls meanly away, with cowering figure and eye askant, the living image of the filthy sin he has committed. He feels he has no longer a right to greet a man, for he is a thief.

And here the preacher gathered images, facts, and satire, and hurled a crushing hailstorm of scorn upon the sordid sin. Then he attacked the present situation (his invariable custom).

"Not all the inmates of a jail were equally guilty on their arrival there. A large proportion of felons were orphans or illegitimate children; others, still more unfortunate, were the children of criminals who had taught them crime from their cradles. Great excuses were to be made for the general mass of criminals; excuses that the ignorant, shallow world could not be expected to make; but the balance of the Sanctuary is not like the world's clumsy balance; it weighs all men to a hair. Excuses will be made for many of you in heaven up to a certain point. And what is that point? The day of your entrance into prison. But now plead no more the ill example of parents and friends, for here you are cut off from it.

"Plead no more that you cannot read, for here you have been taught to read.

"Plead no more the dreadful power of vicious habits, that began when you were unguarded; for those habits have now been cut away from you by force, and better habits substituted.

"Plead no more ignorance of God's Word, for here day by day it is poured into your ears.

"Your situation has other less obvious advantages. Here

you are little exposed to the soul's most dangerous enemy—self-deception. The world destroys thousands of sinners by flattery. Half the great sinners upon earth are what is called respectable. The world tells them they are good—they believe it, and so die as they have lived, and are lost eternally. The world, intending to be more unkind to you, is far more kind; it tells *you* the truth—that you are desperate sinners. Here, then, where everything opens your eyes, oh! fight not against yourselves. Repent, or fearful will be the fresh guilt heaped upon your heads! Even these words of mine must do you good or do you harm. I tremble when I tell you so. It is an awful thing to think." The preacher paused. "You know that I love you—that I would give my life to save one soul of all those I see before me now. Have pity on me and on yourselves. Let me not be so unfortunate as to add to your guilt—I, whose heart yearns to do you good! Oh, my poor brothers and sisters, do not pity yourselves so much less than I pity you—do not love yourselves so much less than I love you! Why will ye die? Repent and be forgiven!

"Some of you profess attachment to me—some talk of gratitude. There are some of my poor brothers and sisters in this jail that say to me, 'Oh, I wish I could do something for you, sir!' Perhaps you have noticed that I have never answered these professions. Well, I will answer them now once for all."

While the preacher paused, there was a movement observed among the prisoners.

"Would you make me very—very sad? Remain impenitent! Would you make me happy? Repent, and turn to God! Not to-morrow, or the next day, but on your knees in your own cells the moment you go thence. You don't know, you can't dream what happiness you will confer on me if you do this!"

Then suddenly opening his arms, with wonderful grace and warmth and energy he cried, "My poor wandering sheep, come—come to the heavenly fold! Let me gather you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing. You are my anxiety, my terror—be my joy, my consolation here, and hereafter the brightest jewels in my heavenly crown."

In this strain he soared higher than my poor heart-clogged wings can follow him. He had lashed sin severely, so he had earned a right to show his love for the sinner.

Gracious words of entreaty and encouragement gushed from him in a crystal stream with looks and tones of more than mortal charity. Men might well doubt was this a man, or was it Christianity speaking? Christianity, born in a stable, was she there, illuminating a jail? For now for a moment or two the sacred orator was more than mortal; so high above earth was his theme, so great his swelling words. He rose, he dilated to heroic size, he flamed with sacred fire; his face shone like an angel's, and no silver trumpet or deep-toned organ could compare with his thundering, pealing, melting voice, that poured the soul of love and charity and heaven upon friend and foe; then seemed it as though a sudden blaze of music and light broke into that dark abode: each sinful form stretched wildly forth to meet them—each ear hung aching on them—each glistening eye lived on them, and every heart panted and quivered as this great Christian swept his immortal harp—amongst thieves and homicides and oppressors—in that sad house of God.

"What did you think of the sermon, Fry?"

Fry.—Liked the first part, sir, where he walked into thieving. Don't like his telling 'em he loves 'em. 'Tisn't to be supposed a gentleman could really love such rubbish as that. Sounds like palaver.

Hawes.—Now, I liked it all, though it spoiled my nap.

Fry.—Well, sir, it is very good of you to like it, for I don't think you like the man.

Hawes.—The man is all very well in his place. He ought to be bottled up in one of the dark cells all the week, and then brought up and uncorked in chapel o' Sundays. It is as good as a romance is a sermon of his.

Fry.—That it is, sir. Comes next after the Newgate Calendar, don't it now? But there's one thing about all his sermons I can't get over.

Hawes.—And what is that?

Fry.—Preaches at 'em so.

Hawes.—Why, ye fool, that is the beauty of him. How is he to hit 'em, if he doesn't hit at 'em?

Fry.—Mr. Jones usen't.

Hawes.—Oh, Jones! He shot his arrow up in the air and let it fall wherever the wind chose to blow it, and then, if it came down on the wrong man's head, he'd say, "Never mind, my boy, accident!—pure accident!" No! give me a

chap that hits out straight from the shoulder. Can't you see this is worth a hundred Joneses beating about the bush and droning us all asleep?

Fry.—So he is, sir; so he is. But then I think he didn't ought to be quite so personal. Fancy his requesting such a lot as ours to repent their sins and go to heaven just to oblige him. There's an inducement! I call that himper dig from the pulpit.

"What d'ye call it?" growled Hawes snappishly.

"Himper dig!" replied Fry stoutly.

In the afternoon Mr. Eden preached against cruelty.

"No crime is so thoroughly without excuse as this. Other crimes have sometimes an adequate temptation—this never. The path to other crimes is downhill; to cruelty is uphill. In the very act, Nature, who is on the side of some crimes, cries out within us against this monstrous sin. The blood of our victim flowing from our blows, its groans and sighs and pallor, stay the uplifted arm and appeal to the furious heart. Wonderful they should ever appeal in vain. Cruelty is not one of our pleasant vices, and the opposite virtues are a garden of delights: 'Mercy is twice blessed; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.' God has written His abhorrence of this monstrous sin in letters of fire and blood on every page of history."

Here he ransacked history, and gave them some thirty remarkable instances of human cruelty, and of its being punished in kind so strangely and with such an exactness of retribution, that the finger of God seemed visible writing on the world—"God hates cruelty."

At the end of his examples he instanced two that happened under his own eye—a favourite custom of this preacher.

"A man was tried in London for cruelty to animals: he was acquitted by a legal flaw, though the evidence was clear against him. This man returned homewards triumphant. The train in which he sat was drawn up by the side of a station. An express train passed on the upline at full speed. At the moment of passing a wheel of the engine broke; a large fragment was driven into the air and fell upon the stationary train; it burst through one of the carriages, and killed a man upon the spot. That man was seated between two other men, neither of whom received the slightest injury. The man so singled out was the cruel man who had evaded man's justice, but could not escape His hand who created the beasts as well as man, and

who abhors all men who are cruel to any creature He has formed.

"A man and his wife conspired to rob and murder their friend and constant guest. Determined to escape detection, they coldly prepared for the deed of blood. Long before the murder, they dug a hole in the passage leading from their parlour to their dining-room, and this hole was to receive the corpse of the man with whom meantime these heartless wretches ate bread day after day, and drank his health at their own board. Several times the unfortunate man walked with his host and hostess over this concealed hole, his destined tomb, before the time came to sacrifice him. At last they murdered him, and buried him in the grave they had prepared for him. The deed done, spite of all their precaution, fear fell on them and hatred, and they fled from the house where the corpse was and from each other, one to the north, one to the south. Fled they ever so fast, or so far apart, justice followed to the north, justice followed to the south, and dragged the miscreants together again and flung them into one prison. They were convicted and condemned to death. There came a fatal morning to this guilty pair, when the sun rose upon them and found them full of health and strength, yet in one short hour they must be dead. They were taken into the prison chapel according to custom, and from the chapel they must pass at once to the gallows. Now it so happened that the direct path from the chapel to the gallows was blocked up by some repairs that were going on in the prison, so the condemned were obliged to make a long circuit. It was one of the largest of our old prisons, a huge irregular building, constructed with no simplicity of design, and one set of officers did not always know at once what was going on in a distant department. Hence it befell that in a certain passage of the jail the condemned and their attendants came suddenly upon a new-made grave! Stones had been taken up, and a grave dug in this passage: the workmen had but just completed it. The grave filled up the passage, which was narrow, and but little used. The men who accompanied the murderers paused abashed and chilled. The murderers paused, and looked at one another; no words can describe that look! Planks were put down, and they walked over their own grave to their death. Is there a sceptic who tells me this was chance? Then I tell him he is a credulous fool to believe that chance can imitate omniscience, omnipotence,

and holiness, so inimitably. In this astounding fact of exact retribution, I see nothing that resembles chance. I see the arm of God, and the finger of God. His arm dragged the murderers to the gallows, His finger thrust the heartless, cruel miscreants across the grave that was yawning for their doomed bodies! Tremble, ye cruel! God hates ye! Men speak of a murder—and sometimes, by way of distinction, they say 'a cruel murder.' See, now, what a crime cruelty must be since it can aggravate murder, the crime before which all other sins dwindle into nothing.

"Of minor cruelties that do not attack life itself, the most horrible, he thought, was cruelty to women. Here the man must trample on every manly feeling, on the instinct and the traditions of sex, on the opinion of mankind, on the generosity that goes with superior strength and courage. A man who is cruel to a woman is called a brute, but if the brutes could speak, they would appeal against this phrase as unjust to them. What animal but man did you ever see maltreat a female of his species? The brutes are not such beasts as bad cruel men are. Or, if you ever saw such a monstrosity, the animal that did it was some notorious coward, such as the deer, which, I believe, is now and then guilty in a trifling degree of this dirty sin, being a rank coward. But who ever saw a lion or a dog, or any courageous animal, let himself down to the level of a cowardly man so far as this?"

Here sprang from his lips a true and tender picture of a wife: the narrow and virtuous circle of her joys, her many sufferings, great and little—no need of being cruel to her; she must suffer so much without that. The claims to pity and uncommon consideration every woman builds up during a few years of marriage. Her inestimable value in the house. How true to the hearth she is unless her husband corrupts her or drives her to despair. How often she is good in spite of his example. How rarely she is evil but by his example. God made her weaker that man might have the honest satisfaction and superior joy of protecting and supporting her. To torture her with the strength so intrusted him for her good is to rebel against Heaven's design—it is to be a monster, a coward, and a fool.

"There was one more kind of cruelty it was his duty to touch upon: harsh treatment of those unhappy persons to

whom it has not pleased God to give a full measure of reason.

"This is a sacred calamity to which the intelligent and the good in all ages and places have been tender and pitiful. In some countries these unfortunates are venerated, and being little able to guard themselves, are held to be under Heaven's especial protection. This is a beautiful belief, and honours our fallen nature. Yet in Christian England, I grieve and blush to say, cruelty often falls on their unprotected heads. Who has not seen the village boys follow and mock these afflicted persons? Youth is cruel, because the great parent of cruelty is general ignorance and inexperience of the class of suffering we inflict. Men who have come to their full reason have not this excuse. What! persecute those whom God hath smitten, but whom He still loves, and will take vengeance on all who maltreat them. On such and on all of you who are cruel, shame and contempt will fall sooner or later even in this world; and at that solemn day when the cruel and their victims shall meet the Judge of the quick and the dead, He on whose mercy hangs your eternal fate, will say to you, 'Have ye shown mercy?' Oh! these words will crush your souls. Madmen! know ye not that the most righteous man on earth can only be saved by God's mercy, not by His justice? Would you forfeit all hope, all chance, all possibility of that mercy, by merciless cruelty to your brothers and sisters of the race of Adam? Does the Day of Judgment seem to you uncertain or so distant that you dare be cruel here during the few brief days you have to prepare yourself for eternity? If you are under this delusion here, I tear it from your souls. That day is at hand, at the door."

Then in a moment, by the magic of eloquence, the great day of retribution was no longer faint and distant, but upon them in all its terrors; and they who in the morning had leaned forward eagerly to catch the message of mercy, now shrank and cowered from the thunder that pealed over their heads, and the lightning of awful words that showed them by flashes the earth quaking and casting forth her dead—the sea trembling and casting forth her dead—the terrible trumpet pealing from pole to pole—the books opened—the dread Judge seated—and hell yawning for guilty.

"Well, sir, how did you like this sermon?" said Fry respectfully.

"He won't preach any more such (imperative mood), him. I'll teach him to preach at people from the pulpit."

"Well, that is what I say, sir; but you said you liked to hear him preach at folk."

"So I do," replied Hawes angrily, "but not at me, ye fool!"

This afternoon two of the prisoners rang their bells, and on the warder coming to them, begged in much agitation to see the chaplain. Mr. Eden was always at the prisoners' orders, and came to both of these; one was a man about thirty, the other a mere boy. The same evening Mr. Hawes sat down, his features working wrathfully, and despatched a note to Mr. Locock, one of the visiting justices, and a particular admirer of his.

Meeting Mr. Eden in the prison, he did not return that gentleman's salute! this was his way of implying war; events were thickening; a storm was brewing. This same evening there was a tap at Mr. Eden's private door, and Evans entered the room. The man's manner was peculiar. He wore outside a dogged look, as if fighting against some inward feeling; he entered looking down most pertinaciously at the floor. "Well, Evans?"

Evans approached, his eyes still glued upon the floor. He shoved a printed paper roughly into Mr. Eden's hand, and said in a tone of sulky reproach, "Saw ye fret because ye could not get it, and couldn't bear to see ye fret."

"Thank you, Evans, thank you!"

"You are very welcome, sir," said Evans with momentary deference and kindness. Then turning suddenly at the door in great wrath with a tendency to whimper, he roared out, "Ye'll get me turned out of my place, that's what ye'll do!" and went off apparently in tremendous dudgeon. The printed paper contained "the rules of the prison," a copy of which Mr. Eden had asked from Hawes, and been refused. Evans had watched his opportunity, and got them from another warder in return for two glasses of grog outside the jail.

Mr. Eden fell to and studied the paper carefully till bed-time. As he read it, his eye more than once flashed with satisfaction in spite of a great despondency that had now for a day or two been creeping upon him.

This depression dated from biped Carter's crucifixion, or soon after. He struggled gallantly against it; it appeared in none of his public acts. But when alone, his heart

seemed to have turned to lead. A cold, languid hopelessness, most foreign to his high sanguine nature, weighed him to the earth, and the Dead Sea rolled over his spirit.

Earnest Mr. Hawes hated good Mr. Eden; one comfort, by means of his influence with the justices he could get him turned out of the prison. Meantime, what could he do to spite him? Begin by punishing a prisoner; that is the only thing that stings him. With these good intentions earnest Hawes turned out and looked about for a prisoner to punish; unfortunately for poor Josephs, the governor's eye fell upon him as he came out of the chapel. The next minute he was put on a stiff crank, which led in due course to the pillory. When he had been in about an hour and a half, Hawes winked to Fry, and said to him under his breath, "Let the parson know."

Fry strolled into the prison: he met Mr. Eden at a cell door. "Josephs refractory again, sir," said he with mock civility.

Mr. Eden looked him in the face, but said nothing. He went to his own room, took a paper off the table, and came into the yard. Josephs was beginning to sham, and a bucket had just been thrown over him amidst the coarse laughter of Messrs. Fry, Hodges, and Hawes. Evans, who happened to be in attendance, stood aloof with his eyes fixed on the ground.

As soon as he saw Mr. Eden coming, Hawes gave a vindictive chuckle. "Another bucket," cried he, and taking it himself, he contrived to sprinkle Mr. Eden, as well as to sluice his immediate victim.

Mr. Eden took no notice of this impertinence, but to the surprise of all there, he strode between the victim and his tormentors, and said sternly, "Do you know that you are committing an illegal assault upon this prisoner?"

"No, I don't," said Hawes with a cold sneer.

"Then I shall show you. Here are the printed rules of the prison; you have no authority over a prisoner but what these rules give you. Now show me where they permit you to pillory a prisoner?"

"They don't forbid it, that is enough."

"No, it is not; they don't forbid you to hang him, or to sear him with a hot iron, but they tell you in this paragraph what punishments you may inflict, and that excludes all punishments of your own invention. You may neither hang him, nor burn him, nor famish him, nor crucify him; all

these acts are equally illegal. So take warning, all of you here—you are all servants of the law—don't let me catch you assaulting a prisoner contrary to the law, or you shall smart to the uttermost. Evans, I command you, in the name of the law, release that prisoner."

Evans, thus appealed to, fidgeted and turned colour, and his hands worked by his side. "Your reverence!" cried he in an imploring tone, and stayed where he was. On this Mr. Eden made no more ado, but darted to Josephs' side, and began to unfasten him with nimble fingers.

Hawes stood dumfoundered for a minute or two, then recovering himself, he roared out—

"Officers, do your duty!"

Fry and Hodges advanced upon Mr. Eden, but, before they could get at him, the huge body of Evans interposed itself. The man was pale, but doggedly resolved.

"Mustn't lay a finger on his reverence," said he, almost in a whisper, but between his clenched teeth, and with the look of a bull-dog over a bone.

"What, do you rebel against me, Evans?"

"No, sir," said Evans, softening his tone, "but nobody must affront his reverence. Look here, sir; his reverence knows a great deal more than I do, and he says this is against the law. He showed you the Act, and you couldn't answer him except by violence, which ain't no answer at all. Now, I am a servant of the law, and I know better than go against the law."

"There, I want no more of your chat; loose the prisoner."

"Seems to me he is loosed," said Fry.

"Go to the 5lb. crank, Josephs, and let me see how much you can do in half an hour."

"That I will, your reverence," and off he ran.

"Now, sir," said Hawes sternly, "I put up with this now, because it must end next week. I have written to the visiting justices, and they will settle whether you are to be master in the jail or I."

"Neither, Mr. Hawes. The law shall be your master and mine."

"Very good; but there's a hole in your coat, for as clever as you are, every jail has its customs as well as its rules."

"Which customs, if illegal, are abuses, and shall be swept out of it."

"I'll promise you one thing—the justices shall sweep you out of the jail."

"How can you promise that?"

"Because they only see with my eyes, and hear with my ears: they would do a great deal more for me than kick out a refractory chaplain."

Mr. Eden's eye flashed, he took out his note-book.

"Present Fry, Hodges, Evans. Mr. Hawes asserts that the visiting justices see only with his eyes and hear with his ears."

Hawes laughed insolently, but a little uneasily.

"In spite of your statement that the magistrates are unworthy of their office, I venture to hope, for the credit of the county, there will not be found three magistrates to countenance your illegal cruelties. But should there be——"

"Ay! what then?"

"I shall go higher, and appeal to the Home Secretary."

"Ha! ha! He won't take any notice of you."

"Then I shall appeal to the Sovereign."

"And if she takes you for a madman?"

"I shall appeal to the people. Oh, Mr. Hawes, I give you my honour this great question, whether or not the law can penetrate a prison, shall be sifted to the bottom. Pending my appeals to the Home Office, the Sovereign, and the people, I have placed a thousand pounds in my solicitor's hands——"

"A thousand pounds! have you, sir? What for, if I am not too curious?"

"For this, sir. Each prisoner whom you have pilloried and starved and assaulted, contrary to law, shall bring an action of assault against you the moment he leaves the prison. He shall have counsel, and the turnkeys and myself shall be subpœnaed as evidence. When once we get you into court, you will find that a prison is the stronghold of law, not a den of lawlessness."

He then turned sharp on the warders.

"I warn you against all your illegal practices. Mr. Hawes' orders shall neither excuse nor protect you: you owe your first obedience to the Crown and the law. Here are your powers and your duties. You can all read. Here it is ruled that a prisoner shall receive four visits a day from the governor, chaplain, and two turnkeys; these four visits are to keep the man from breaking down under the separate and silent system. You have all been breaking this rule, but

you shall not. I shall report you Evans, you Fry, and you Hodges, and you Mr. Hawes, to the authorities, if after this warning you leave a single prisoner unvisited and unspoken with."

"Have you done preaching, parson?"

"Not quite, jailer."

He tapped the printed paper.

"Here is a distinct order that sick prisoners shall be taken out of their cells into the infirmary, a vast room where they have a much better chance of recovering than in those stinking cells, ventilated scientifically, *i.e.*, not ventilated at all. Now there are seven prisoners dangerously ill at this moment; yet you smother these unfortunates in their solitary cells, instead of giving them the infirmary and nurses according to the law. Let these seven persons be in the infirmary before post-time this evening, or to-morrow I report you to the Secretary of State."

With these words he went off, leaving them all looking at one another.

"He is coming back again," said Fry.

He did come back again, with heightened colour and flashing eyes.

"Here is the prisoners' diet," cried he, tapping the printed rules; "it is settled to an ounce by law, and I see no authority given to the jailer to tamper with it under any circumstances. Yet I find you perpetually robbing prisoners of their food. Don't let me catch either jailers or turnkeys at this again. Jailers and turnkeys have no more right to steal a prisoner's food than to rob the till of the Bank of England. He receives it defined in bulk and quality from the law's own hand, and the wretch who will rob him of an ounce of it is a felon without a felon's excuse; and as a felon I will proceed against him by the dog-whip of the criminal law, by the gibbet of the public press, and by every weapon that wit and honesty have ever found to scourge cruelty and theft since civilisation dawned upon the earth."

He was gone and left them all turned to statues. A righteous man's wrath is far more terrible than the short-lived passion of the unprincipled. It is rarer, and springs from a deeper source than temper.

Even Hawes staggered under this mortal defiance so fierce and unexpected. For a moment he regretted having pushed matters so far.

N.T.L. A lad was pinned against the wall. *Page* 113.

This scene let daylight in upon shallow, earnest Hawes, and showed him a certain shallow error he had fallen into. Because insolence had no earthly effect on the great man's temper, he had concluded that nothing could make him boil over. A shade of fear was now added to rage, hatred, and a desire for vengeance.

"Fry, come to my house."

Evans had a wife and children, and these hostages to fortune weighed down his manly spirit. He came to Hawes as he was going out and said submissively, though graciously—

"Very sorry, sir, to think I should disobey you, but when his reverence said it was against the law——"

"That is enough, my man," replied Hawes quietly; "he has bewitched you, it seems. When he is kicked out, you will be my servant again, I daresay."

The words and the tone were not ill-humoured. It was not Hawes' cue to quarrel with a turnkey.

Evans looked suddenly up, for his mind was relieved by Mr. Hawes' moderation; he looked up and saw a cold, stern eye dwelling on him with a meaning that had nothing to do with the words spoken.

Small natures read one another.

Evan's saw his fate inscribed in Hawes' eye.

CHAPTER XVI.

Hawes and Fry sat in council. A copy of the prison rules was before them, and the more they looked at them after Mr. Eden's interpretation, the less they liked them; they were severe and simple; stringent against the prisoners on certain points—stringent in their favour on others.

"The sick list must go to the infirmary, I believe," said Hawes thoughtfully. "He'd beat us there. The justices will support me on every other point, because they must contradict themselves else. I'll have that fellow out of the jail, Fry, before a month is out; and meantime what can I do to be revenged on him?"

"Punish 'em all the more," suggested the simple-minded Fry.

"No, that won't do; better keep a little quiet now till he is out of the jail. Fine it would look if he was really

to bribe these vermin to bring actions against me, and subpœna himself and that sneaking dog Evans."

"Well, sir, but if you turn him out he will do it all the more."

"You fool, can't you see the difference? If he comes into court a servant of the Crown, every lie he tells will go for gospel. But if he comes a disgraced servant, cashiered for refractory conduct, why then we could tell the jury it is all his spite at being turned off."

"You know a thing or two, sir," whined the doleful Fry.

Hawes passed him a fresh tumbler of grog, and pondered deeply and anxiously. But suddenly an idea flashed on him that extinguished his other meditations. "Give me the rules." He ran his eye rapidly over them. "Why, no! of course not; what a fool I was not to see that half an hour ago."

"What is it, sir?"

"Finish your grog first, and then I have a job for you." He sat down and wrote two lines on a slip of paper.

"Have you done?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then take this order."

"Yes, sir."

"And the printed rules in your hand—here, take 'em."

"Yes, sir."

"And take Hodges and Evans with you, and tell me every word that sneaking dog Evans says and everything he does."

"Yes, sir. But what are we all three to do?"

"Execute this order!"

An ebullition of wrath was as rare with Mr. Eden as an eruption of Vesuvius. His deep-rooted indignation against cruelty remained; it was a part of his nature. But his ruffled feathers smoothed themselves the moment little Hawes and Co. were out of his eye. He even said to himself, "What is the matter with me?" one moment so despondent, the next irascible. I hardly know myself. I must take a little of my antidote." So saying, he proceeded to visit some of those cells into which he had introduced rational labour (anti-theft he called it). Here he found cheerful looks as well as busy hands. Here industry was relished with a gusto inconceivable to those who have never stagnated body and soul in enforced solitude

and silence. Here for the time at least were honest converts to anti-theft. He had seen them dull and stupid, brutalised, drifting like inanimate bodies on the heavy waters of the Dead Sea. He had drawn them ashore and put life into them. He had taught their glazed eyes to sparkle with the stimulus of rational and interesting work, and those same eyes rewarded him by beaming on him with pleasure and gratitude whenever he came. This soothed and cheered his weary spirit, vexed by the wickedness and stupidity that surrounded him and obstructed the good work.

His female artisans gave him a keen pleasure, for here he benefited a sex as well as a prisoner. He had long been saying that women are as capable as men of a multitude of handicrafts, from which they are excluded by man's jealousy and grandmamma's imbecility. And this wise man hoped to raise a few Englishwomen to the industrial level of Frenchwomen and Englishmen; not by writing and prattling that the sex are at present men's equals in intelligence and energy, which is a stupid falsehood, calculated to keep them for ever our inferiors, by persuading them they need climb no higher than they have climbed.

His line was very different. "At present you are infinitely man's inferior in various energy," said he. "Dependants are inferiors throughout the world."

If they were not so at first starting, such a relation would make them so in two months.

"Try and be more than mere dependants on men," was his axiom. "Don't *talk* that you are his equal, and then open that eloquent mouth to be fed by his hand—do something! It is by doing fifty useful and therefore lucrative things to your one that man becomes your creditor, and a creditor will be a superior to the world's end. Out of these fifty things you might have done twenty as well as he can do them, and ten much better; and those thirty, added to the domestic duties in which you do so much more than your share, would go far to balance the account and equalise the sexes."

Thus he would sometimes talk to the more intelligent of his hussies; but he did a great deal more than talk. He supplied from himself that deficiency of inventive power and enterprise which is woman's weak point; and he tilled those wide powers of masterly execution which they possess unknown to grandpapa Cant and grandmamma

Precedent. As this clear head had foreseen, his women came out artisans. The eye that could thread a needle proved accurate enough for anything. Their supple taper fingers soon learned to pick up type, and place it quite as quick as even the stiff digits of the male, all one size from knuckle to nail. The same with watchmaking, and other trades reputed masculine; they beat the men's heads off at learning many kinds of finger-work new to both: their singular patience stood them in good stead here; they undermined difficulties that the males tried to jump over and fell prostrate.

A great treat was in store; one of the fruit-trees he had planted in the huge fallow of —— Jail, was to be shaken this afternoon. Two or three well-disposed prisoners had been set to review their past lives candidly, and to relate them simply, with reflections. Of these Mr. Eden cut out every one which had been put in to please him, retaining such as were sober and seemed genuine to his lynx eye.

Mr. Eden knew that some men and women listen more to their fellows than their superiors—to the experiences and sentiments of those who are in their own situation, than to those who stand higher but farther away. He had found out that a bad man's life honestly told is a beacon. So he set "roguery teaching by examples."

There were three male narratives in the press, and two female. For a day or two past, the printers (all women) had been setting up the type, and now the sheets were to be struck off.

There was no little expectation among the prisoners. They were curious to see their compeers in print, and to learn their stories, and see how they would tell them; and as for the writers, their bodies were immured, but their minds fluttered about on tip-toe round the great engine of publicity, as the author of the "Novum Organon" fluttered when he first went into print, and as the future authoress of "Lives and Careers of Infants in Arms" will flutter.

The press stood in the female-governor's room. One she-artisan, duly taught before, inked the type, and put in a blank sheet.

No. 2 pulled the bar of the press towards her, and at the moment of contact threw herself back with sudden

vigour, and gave the telling knip; the types were again covered with ink, the sheet reversed, and No. 3 (one of the writers) drew out a printed sheet—two copies of two stories complete.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried No. 3, flushing with surprise and admiration, "how beautiful! See, your reverence, here is mine—'Life of an Unfortunate Girl.'"

"Yes, I see it. And pray, what do you mean by an unfortunate girl?"

"Oh, sir! you know."

"Unfortunate means one whom we are bound to respect as well as pity. Has that been your character?"

"No," was the mournful reply.

"Then why print a falsehood? Falsehoods lurk in adjectives as well as substantives. Misapplied terms are strongholds of self-deception. Nobody says 'I am unfortunate, therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.' Such words are fortifications to keep self-knowledge and its brother repentance from the soul."

"Oh, sir! what am I to call myself?" She hid her face in her hands.

"My dear, you told me a week ago you were—a penitent."

"So I am, indeed I am. Sir, may I change it to 'a penitent girl?'"

"You would make me very happy if you could do it with truth."

"Then I can, indeed I can." And she took out "an unfortunate," and put in "a penitent."

"There," said she, glowing with exultation and satisfaction, "'Life of a Penitent Girl.'"

Oh, it was a pretty sight! Their little hearts were all in it. Their little spirits rose visibly as the work went on—such beaming eyes—such glowing cheeks, and innocent looks of sparkling triumph to their friend and father, who smiled back like Jupiter, and quizzings of each other to stimulate to greater speed.

In went the sheets, on went the press, out came the tales, up grew the pile, amidst quips and cranks and rays of silver-toned laughter, social labour's natural music. They were all so innocent and so happy, when the door was unceremoniously opened, and in burst Fry and Hodges, followed by Evans crawling with his eyes on the ground.

The workwomen looked astonished, but did not interrupt

their work. Fry came up to Mr. Eden, and gave him a slip of paper on which Hawes had written an order that all work not expressly authorised by the law should be expelled from the jail on the instant.

Mr. Eden perused the order, and the colour rose to the roots of his hair. By way of comment, Fry put the prison rules under his eye.

"Anything about printing, or weaving, or watchmaking in these rules, sir?"

Mr. Eden was silent.

"Perhaps you will cast your eye over 'em and see, sir," continued Fry slily. "Shouldn't like to offend the law again."

Mr. Eden took the paper, but not to read it—he knew it by heart. It was to hide his anguish from the enemy. Hawes had felled him with his own weapon. He put down the paper and showed his face, which was now stern and composed.

"What we are doing is against the letter of the law, as your pillory and your starvation of prisoners are against both letter and spirit. Mr. Hawes shall find no excuse for his illegal practices in any act of mine."

He then turned to the artisans. "Girls, you must leave off."

"Leave off, sir?" cried No. 3 faintly.

"Yes; no words. Obey the prison-rules. They do not allow it."

"Come, my birds," shouted Hodges roughly to the women. "Stand clear, we want this gear."

"What do you want of it, Mr. Hodges?"

"Only to put it outside the prison-gate, sir. That is the order."

The printing-press—representative of knowledge, enemy of darkness, stupidity, cruelty, organ of civilisation—was ignominiously thrust to the door.

This feat performed, they went to attack anti-theft.

"Will you come along with us, sir, to see it is all legal?" sneered Fry.

"I will come to see that insolence is not added to cruelty."

At the door of Mary Baker's cell Mr. Eden hung back as Hodges and Fry passed in. At last, after a struggle, he entered the cell. The turnkeys had gathered up the girl's work and tools, and were coming out with them,

whilst the artisan stood desolate in the middle of the cell.

"Oh, sir," cried she to Mr. Eden, "I am glad you are here. These blackguards have broke into my cell, and they are robbing it."

"Hush, Mary; what they are doing is the law, and we were acting against the law."

"Were we, sir?"

"Yes; it is a bad law, and will be changed, but till it is changed we must obey it. You are only one victim among many. Be patient, and pray for help to bear it."

"Yes, your reverence. Are they all to be robbed of their tools?"

"All!"

"Poor things!" said Mary Baker.

"Evans, it is beyond my strength—I am but a man; I can bear even this, but I can't bear to see it done. I can't bear it! I can't bear it!"

And his reverence turned his back on the moral butchers, and crept away to his own room. There he sank into a chair, and laid his brow upon the table, with his hands stretched out before him, and his whole frame trembling most piteously.

Eden and Hawes are not level antagonists—one takes things to heart, the other to temper.

In this bitter hour it seemed to him impossible that he could ever counteract the pernicious Hawes.

"There is but one chance left for these poor souls. I shall try it, and it will fail. Well, let it fail! Were there a thousand more chances against me than there are, I must battle to the last. Let me mature my plan;" and he fell into a sad but stern reverie.

He lay thus crushed, though not defeated, more than two hours in silence. Had Hawes seen him he would have exulted at his appearance.

"A man from the jail to speak to you, sir."

A heavy rap at the parlour door, and Evans came in sheepishly smoothing down his hair. Mr. Eden turned his head as he lay on the sofa, and motioned him to a seat.

"I couldn't sleep till I had spoken to you. I obeyed your orders, sir; we have undone your work."

"How did the poor souls bear it?"

"Some cried, some abused us, one or two showed they were better than we are."

"How?"

"They prayed Heaven to forgive us, and hoped we might never come to know what they felt. I wish I'd never seen the inside of a jail. Fry got a scratched face in one cell, sir."

"I am sorry to hear that. I shall have to scold her. Who was it?"

"You won't scold her; you won't have the heart."

"I will scold her whether I have the heart or not. Who was it?"

"No. 57, a gal that had some caterpillars."

"Silkworms!"

"Yes, sir, silkworms; and it seems she has got to be uncommon fond of them—calls 'em her children, poor soul. When we came in, and went to take them away, she stood up for 'em, and said we had no right—his reverence gave them her."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, of course they made short work, and took them away by force. Then I saw the girl turn white, and her eye getting wildish. However, I don't know as it would have come to anything, but, with them snatching away the leaves and the grubs, one of them fell on the ground. The poor girl she goes to lift it up, and Fry he sees her, and put his foot on it before she could get to it."

"Ah!"

"I daresay he didn't stop to think, you know; but I don't envy him having done it. Well, sir, he paid for it. The girl just gave one sort of a yell—you could not call it anything else—and she went right at his head, both claws going, and as quick one after another as a cat. The blood squirted like a fountain—I never saw anything like it. She'd have killed him if it hadn't been for Hodges and me."

"Killed him? nonsense—a great strong fellow!"

"No nonsense at all, sir. She was stronger than he was for a moment or two, and that moment would have done his business. She meant killing. Sir," said Evans, lowering his voice, "her teeth were making for his jugular when I wrenched her away, and it was like tearing soul from body to get her off him, and she snarling and her teeth gnashing for him all the time."

Mr. Eden winced.

"The wretched creature! I was putting her on the way to heaven, and in one moment they made a fiend of her. Evans, you are not the same man you were a month ago."

"No, sir, that I am not. When I think of what a brute I used to be to them poor creatures, I don't seem to know myself."

"What has changed you?"

"Oh, you know very well."

"Do I? No; I have a guess; but——"

"Why, your sermons, to be sure."

"My sermons?"

"Yes, sir. Why, how could I hear them and my heart be as hard as it used? They would soften a stone."

A faint streak of surprise and simple satisfaction crossed Mr. Eden's sallow face.

"But it isn't your sermons only—it is your life, as the saying is. I was no better than Hawes and Fry, and the rest. I used to look on a prisoner as so much dirt. But when I saw a gentleman like you respect them, and say openly you loved them, I began to take a thought, and says I, 'Hollo! if his reverence respects them so, an ignorant brute like Jack Evans isn't to look down on them.'"

"Ah! confess, too, that half-hour in the jacket opened your eyes, and so your heart."

"It did, sir—it did. I was like a good many more that misuse prisoners. I didn't know how cruel I was."

"You are on my side, then?"

"Yes, I am on your side, and I am come here mainly to speak my mind to you. Sir, it goes to my heart to see you lost and wasted in such a place as this."

"You think I do no good here?"

"No! no! sir. Why, I am a proof the other way. But you would do more good anywhere else. Everybody says you are a bright and shining light, sir. Then why stay where there is dirty water thrown over you every day? Besides, it is killing you! I don't want to frighten you, sir, but if you could only see how you are changed since you came here."

"I do feel very ill."

"Of course you do; you are ill, and you will be worse if you don't get out of this dreadful place. If you are so fond of prisons, sir, you can go from here to another

prison. There is more than one easy-going chaplain as would be glad to change with you."

"Do you think so?" said Mr. Eden faintly, lying on his back on the sofa.

"Not a doubt of it. If it warn't for Hawes you would convert half this prison; but you see the governor is against you, and he is stronger than you. So it is no good to go wasting yourself. Now, what will be the upshot? Why, you'll break your heart to begin, and lose your health; and when all is done, at a word from Hawes the justices will turn you out of the jail—and send me after you for taking your part."

"What do you advise?"

"Why, cut it."

"Cut it?"

"Turn your back on the whole ignorant lot, and save yourself for better things. Why, you will win many a battle yet, your reverence, if you don't fling yourself away this time," said Evans in tones of homely cheerfulness and encouragement.

There was a deal of good sense in the rough fellow's words, and a homely sympathy not intruded, but rather as it were forcing its way against the speaker's intention. All this co-operated powerfully with Mr. Eden's present inclination and feeling as he lay sick and despondent upon the couch.

"So that is really your advice?" inquired Mr. Eden feebly and regretfully.

"Yes, your reverence, that is my advice."

Mr. Eden rose in a moment like an elastic spring, and whirled round in front of Evans. "And this is my answer —RETRO SATANAS!" shouted he, with two eyes flashing like a pair of sabres in the sun.

"Mercy on us!" roared Evans, recoiling so hastily that he rolled over a chair, "what is that?" and he sat upon the floor a long way off, with eyes like saucers, and repeated in a whisper, "What is that?"

"A quotation," replied the other grimly.

"A quotation! now only think of that," said Evans, much relieved. "Sounded like cussing and swearing in Latin."

"Come here, my good friend, and sit beside me."

Evans came gingerly.

"Well, but ye mustn't thunder at me in Latin any more."

"Well, I won't."

"It isn't fair; how can I stand up against Latin?"

"Well, come here and I'll have at you in the vulgar tongue. Aha! So you come in robust health and spirits and tempt a poor broken sick creature to mount the white feather; to show his soldierly qualities by running from the foe to some cool spot where there are no enemies, and there fighting the good fight in peace. Evans, you are a good creature, but you are a poor creature. Yes, Hawes is strong, yet I will resist him. And I am weak—yet I will resist. He will get the justices on his side—yet I will resist. I am sick and dispirited—yet I will resist. The representative of humanity and Christianity in a stronghold of darkness and cruelty and wrong must never sag with doubt nor shake with fear. I will fight with pen and hand and tongue against these outlaws, so long as there is a puff of wind in my body, and a drop of indomitable blood in my veins."

"No doubt you are game enough," mourned Evans; "I wish you wern't."

"And as for you, you came here to seduce a sick broken creature from his Master's service; you shall remain to be enlisted in it yourself instead."

Evans shuffled uneasily on his chair at these words: "I think I am on your side," said he.

"Half! but it is no use being half anything; your hour is come; choose between all right and all wrong."

"I wouldn't be long choosing if it weren't for one thing."

"And what is that one thing which can outweigh the one thing needful?"

"My wife and my four children; if I get myself turned out of this jail, how am I to find bread for that small lot?"

"And do you think shilly-shallying between two stools will secure your seat? You have gone too far with me to retract. Don't you see that the jailer means to get you dismissed the next time the justices visit the jail for business? Can't you read your fate in the man's eye?"

Evans groaned. "I read it, I read it, but I didn't want to believe it."

"He set a trap for you half an hour after you had defended me."

"He did! I told my wife I was a gone coon, but she overpersuaded me: 'Keep quiet,' said she, 'and 'twill blow

over.' But you see it in the same light as I did, don't you, sir?"

Mr. Eden smiled grimly in assent.

"You are a doomed man," said he coolly; "half measures can't save you, but whole measures may—perhaps."

"What is to be done, sir?" asked Evans helplessly.

"Your only chance is to go heart and hand with me in the project which occupies me now."

"I will, sir," cried Fluctuans with a sudden burst of resolution, "for I'm druv in a corner. So please tell me what is your project?"

"To get Mr. Hawes dismissed from this jail."

As he uttered these words the reverend gentleman had a severe spasm, which forced him to lie back and draw his breath hard. Evans uttered something between a cry of dismay and a groan of despair, and stared down upon this audacious invalid with wonder and ire at his supernatural but absurd cool courage.

"Turn our governor out of this jail? Now hark to that! You might as well try to move a mountain; and look at you lying there scarce able to move yourself, and talking like that."

"Pour me out a cup of tea, Mr. Faintheart; I am in great pain. Thank you!"

He took the cup, and as he stirred it he said coolly, "Did you ever read of Marshal Saxe, Mr. Faintheart? He fought the battle of Fontenoy as he lay a-dying. He had himself carried on his bed of death from one part of the field to another; at first the fight went against him, but he spurned craven counsels with his expiring heart; he saw the enemy's blunder with his dying eye, and waved his troops on to victory with his dying hand. This is one of the great feats of earth. But the soldiers of Christ are as stout-hearted as any man that ever carried a marshal's baton or a sergeant's pike. Yes! I am ill, and I feel as if I were dying, Evans; but living or dying I am the Lord's. I will fight for Him to the last gasp, and I will thrust this malefactor from his high office with the last action of my hand. Will you help me, or will you not?"

"I will, sir! I will! What on earth can I do?"

"You can turn the balanced scale and win the day."

"Can I, sir?" cried Evans, greatly puzzled.

"You will find some wine in that cupboard, my man; fill yourself a tumbler; I will sip my tea and explain myself. You think this Hawes is a mountain; no! he is a large pumpkin, hollow at the core. You think him strong; no! he but seems so, because some of the many at whose mercy he is are so weak. There is a flaw in Hawes which must break him sooner or later. He is a felon. The law hangs over his head by a single hair; he has forfeited his office, and will be turned out of it the moment we can find among his many superiors one man with one grain either of honesty or intelligence."

"But how shall we find that, sir?"

"By looking for it everywhere till we find it somewhere. Mr. Hawes tells me in other words that the visiting justices do not possess the one grain we require. I profit by the intelligence the enemy was weak enough to give me, and I go—not to the visiting justices. To-morrow, if my case is ready, I send a memorial to the Home Office, accuse Hawes of felonious practices, and demand an inquiry."

Evans' eye sparkled; he began to gather strength from the broken man.

"But now comes the difficulty. A man should never strike a feeble blow. My appeal will be read by half-educated clerks. If I don't advance something that the small official mind can take in, I shall never reach the heads of the Office. It would be madness to begin by attacking national prejudices, by combating a notion so stupid, and therefore so deep-rooted, as that prisoners have no legal rights. No; the pivot of my assault must be something that a boy can afford to be able to comprehend for eighty pounds a year and a clerk's desk in a Government office. Now Mr. Hawes has, for many months past, furnished false reports to the justices and to the Home Office. Here is the true stepping-stone to an inquiry, here is the fact to tell on the official mind; for the man's cruelty and felonious practices are only offences against God and the law; but a false report is an offence against the Office. And here I need your help."

"You shall have it, sir."

"I want to be able to prove this man's reports to be lies; I think such a proof exists," said Mr. Eden very thoughtfully. "Now, if it does, you alone can get hold of it for me. One of the turnkeys notes down every

punishment of a prisoner in a small pocket-book, for I have seen him."

"Yes, sir; Fry does—never misses."

"What becomes of those notes?"

"I don't know."

"What if he keeps a book and enters everything in it?"

"But if he had, shouldn't we have caught a glimpse of it?"

"Humph! A man does not take notes constantly, and destroy them. Fry too is an enthusiast in his way; I am sure he keeps a record, and if he does, it is a true one, for he has no object in tampering with his own facts. Bring me such a book or any record kept by Fry; let me have it for twelve hours, and Hawes shall be turned out of the jail and you stay in it."

"Sir!" cried Evans in great excitement, "if there is such a thing you shall see it to-morrow morning."

"No! to-night! Come, you have an hour before you. Do you want the sinews of war? Here, take this five pounds with you; you may have to buy a sight of it; but if you ask him whether I am right in telling you it is not the custom of jails to crucify prisoners in the present century, perhaps the barbarian will produce his record of abuses to prove to you that it is. Work how you please; but be wary—be intelligent, and bring me Fry's ledger—or never look me in the face again."

He waved his hand, and Evans strode out of the room, animated with a spirit not his own. He who had animated him lay back on the sofa prostrated. Half an hour elapsed, no Evans; a quarter of an hour more, still no Evans; but just before the hour struck, in he burst out of breath, but red with triumph.

"Your reverence is a witch—you can see in the dark—look here, sir!" and he flung a dirty ledger on the table. "Here's all the money, sir. He did not get a farthing of it. I flattered the creature's pride, and he dropped the cheese into my hand like the old carrion crow when they asked him for one of his charming songs. But he had no notion it was going out of the jail; so you'll bring it in and give it me back the first thing to-morrow, sir. I must run back—time's up! Good-night, your reverence. Am I on your side, or whose?"

"Good-night, my fine fellow; you shan't be turned out of the jail now. Good-night."

He wanted him gone. He went to a drawer and took out his own book, a copy of Hawes' public log-book, which he had made as soon as he came into the jail with the simple view of guiding himself by the respectable precedents he innocently expected to find there. He lighted candles, placed his sheets by the side of Fry's well-thumbed ledger, and plunged into a comparison.

It was as he expected. On one side lay the bare, simple, brutal truth in Fry's hand; on the other, the same set of facts coloured, moulded, and cooked in every imaginable way to bear inspection, with occasional suppressions where the deed and consequences were too frightful to bear colouring, moulding, extenuating, or cooking.

The book was a thick quarto, containing a strict record of the prison for four years; two years of Captain O'Connor, and two of Hawes, the worthy who had supplanted him.

Mr. Eden was a rapid penman; he set to, and by half-past eleven o'clock he had copied the first part; for under O'Connor there were comparatively few punishments. Then he attacked Hawes' reign. Sheet after sheet was filled and numbered. He threw them on another table as each was filled. Three o'clock; still he wrote with all his might. Four o'clock; black spots danced before his eyes, and his fingers ached, and his brow burned, and his feet were ice. Still the light, indefatigable pen galloped along the paper. Meantime the writer's feelings were of the most mixed and extraordinary character. Often his eye flashed with triumph, as Fry exposed the dishonesty and utter mendacity of Hawes. Oftener still it dilated with horror at the frightful nature of the very revelations. At six o'clock Fry's record was all copied out.

Mr. Eden shaved and took his bath, and ran into the town. He knocked up a solicitor with whom he was acquainted.

"I want you to make my will, while your son attests this copy in this ledger."

"But my son is in bed."

"Well, he can read in bed. Which is his room?"

"That one."—Rap! ("Come in.")

"Here, Mr. Edward, compare these two, and correct or attest this as a true copy—twenty minutes' work—two guineas; here they are on your drawers;" and he chucked

the documents on the bed, opened the shutters, and drew the bed-curtains; and passing his arm under the father's, he drew him into his own office, opened the shutters, put paper before him, and dictated a will. Three bequests (one to Evans), and his mother residuary legatee. The will written, he ran upstairs, made father and son execute it, and then darted out, caught a fly that was going to the railway, engaged it; upstairs again. The work was done, copy attested.

"Half-a-crown if you are at the jail in five minutes."

Galloped off with his two documents—entered the jail—went to his own room—sent for Evans—gave him Fry's book, and ordered himself the same breakfast the prisoners had.

"I am bilious, and no wonder. I have been living too luxuriously; if I had been content with the diet my poor brothers live on, I should be in better health; it serves me just right."

Then he sat down and wrote a short memorial to the Secretary for the Home Department, claiming an inquiry into the jailer's conduct.

"I have evidence on the spot to show that for two years he has been guilty of illegal practices. That he has introduced into the prison an unlawful instrument of torture. That during his whole period of office he has fabricated partial, coloured, and false reports of his actions in the prison, and also of their consequences; that he has suppressed all mention of no less than seven attempts at suicide, and has given a false colour, both with respect to the place of death, the manner of death, and the causes of death of some twenty prisoners besides. That his day-book, kept in the prison for the inspection and guide of the magistrates, is a tissue of frauds, equivocations, exaggerations, diminutions, and direct falsehoods; that his periodical reports to the Home Office are a tissue of the same frauds, suppressions, inventions, and direct falsehoods.

"The truth, therefore, is inaccessible to you except by a severe inquiry conducted on the spot. That inquiry I pray for on public grounds, and, if need be, demand in my own person, as Her Majesty's servant driven to this strait—

"I am responsible to Her Majesty for the lives and well-being of the prisoners, and yet unable, without your

intervention, to protect them against illegal violence covered by organised fraud."

Mr. Eden copied this, and sent the copy at once to Mr. Hawes, with two lines to this effect, that the duplicate should not leave the town till seven in the evening, so Mr. Hawes had plenty of time to write to the Home Secretary by same post, and parry or meet this blow if he thought it worth his while.

It now remained only to post the duplicate for the Home Office. Mr. Eden directed it and waxed it, but even as he leaned over it sealing it, the room became suddenly dark to him, and his head seemed to weigh a ton. With an instinct of self-preservation he made for the sofa, which was close behind him, but before he could reach it his senses had left him, and he fell with his head and shoulders upon the couch, but his feet on the floor, the memorial tight in his hand. He paid the penalty of being a blood-horse—he ran till he dropped.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Two ladies to see you," grunted the red-haired servant, throwing open the door without ceremony; and she actually bounced out again without seeing anything more than that her master was lying on the sofa.

Susan Merton and her aunt came rapidly and cheerfully into the room.

"Here we are, Mr. Eden, Aunt Davies and I—oh!" The table being between the sofa and the door, the poor gentleman's actual condition was not self-evident from the latter, but Susan was now in the middle of the room, and her gaiety gave way in a moment to terror.

"Why, the man has fainted!" cried Mrs. Davies hurriedly. Susan clasped her hands together, and turned very pale; but for all that she was the first at Mr. Eden's head. "He is choking! he is choking! Help me, aunt, help me!" but even while crying for help, her nimble fingers had untied and flung away Mr. Eden's white necktie, which, being high and stiff, was doing him a very ill turn, as the air forcing itself violently through his nostrils plainly showed.

"Take his legs, aunt! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Don't be a fool, girl; it is only a faint."

Susan flew to the window and threw it open, then flew back and seized one end of the couch. Her aunt comprehended at a glance, and the two carried it with its burden to the window.

"Open the door, aunt," cried Susan, as she whipped out her scent-bottle, and with her finger wetted the inside of his nostrils with the spirit as the patient lay in the thorough draught. Susan sobbed with sorrow and fear, but her emotion was far from disabling her.

She poured some of her scent into a water-glass and diluted it largely. She made her aunt take a hand-screen from the mantel-piece. She plunged her hand into the liquid and flung the drops sharply into Mr. Eden's face; and Mrs. Davies fanned him rapidly at the same time.

These remedies had a speedy effect. First the film cleared from the patient's bright eye, then a little colour diffused itself gradually over his cheek, and last his lips lost their livid tint. As soon as she saw him coming to, Susan composed herself; and Mr. Eden, on his return to consciousness, looked up and saw a beautiful young woman looking down on him with a cheerful, encouraging smile and wet cheeks.

"Ah!" sighed he, and put out his hand faintly to welcome Susan, "but what—how do I come here?"

"You have been a little faint," said Susan, smiling, "but you are better now, you know."

"Yes, thank you. How good of you to come! Who is this lady?"

"My aunt, sir; a very notable woman. See, she is setting your things to rights already. Aunt, I wonder at you."

She then dipped the corner of her handkerchief in scent, and slightly colouring now that her patient was conscious, she made the spirit enter his nostrils.

He gave a sigh of languid pleasure—"That is so invigorating." Then he looked upward—"See how good God is to me! in my sore need He has sent me help. Oh, how pleasant is the face of a friend! By the way, I took you for an angel at first," added he naively.

"But you have come to your senses now, sir! ha! ha! ha!" cried busy, merry Mrs. Davies, hard at work. For as soon as the patient began visibly to return to life, she had turned her back on him and fallen on the furniture.

"I hope you are come to stay with me"

As Susan was about to answer in the negative Mrs. Davies made signals for a private conference: and after some whispering, Susan replied, "That her aunt wanted to put the house in apple-pie order, and that she, Susan, felt too anxious about him to go until he should be quite recovered."

"In that case, ladies," said he, "I consecrate to you my entire second floor, three rooms;" and he rang the bell and said to the servant, "Take your orders from these ladies, and show them the second floor."

While his visitors were examining their apartments, Mr. Eden sought a little rest, and had no sooner dropped upon his bed, than sleep came to his relief.

He slept for nearly four hours; at first soundly, then dozing and dreaming. While he slept, a prisoner sent for him; but Susan would not have him awakened for that.

By and by Susan went into the town, leaving her aunt sole guardian.

"Now, aunt," said she, "don't let him be disturbed, whoever comes for him. It is as much as his life is worth!"

"Well, then, I won't! there."

Susan had not been long gone when a turnkey called, and was shown into the parlour where Mrs. Davies was very busy. He looked about him, and told her he had called for a book Mr. Eden promised him.

"Mr. Eden is asleep."

"Asleep at this time of day?" said the man incredulously.

"Yes, asleep," answered Mrs. Davies sharply; "is he never to have any sleep?"

"Well, perhaps you will tell him Mr. Fry has come for the book as requested."

"Couldn't think of disturbing him for that, Mr. Fry," replied Mrs. Davies, not intermitting her work for a single moment.

"Very well, ma'am!" said Mr. Fry in dudgeon. "I never was here before, and I shan't ever come again—that is all;" and off he went.

Mrs. Davies showed her dismay at this threat by dusting on without once taking her eye or her mind off her job.

It was eight o'clock. Mr. Eden woke and found it almost dark.

He rose immediately: "Why, I have slept the day away," thought he in dismay; "and my memorial to the Home Office—it is past post-time, and I have not sent it." He

came hastily downstairs and entered the parlour: he found it in a frightful state. All the chairs were in the middle of the room, every part of which was choked up, except a pathway three feet broad, that ran by the side of the wall all round it. From this path all access into the interior was blocked by the furniture, which now stood upon an area frightfully diminished by this loss of three feet taken from each wall. Mrs. Davies was a character—a notable woman! Mr. Eden's heart sank at the sight.

To find himself put to rights gives a bachelor an innocent pleasure, but the preliminary process of being put entirely to wrongs crushes his soul. "Another fanatic let loose on me," thought he; "and my room is like a road that is just mended, as they call it." He peered about here and there through a grove of chairs whose legs were kicking in the air as they sat bosom downwards upon their brethren, but he could see no memorial. He rang the bell and inquired of the servant whether she had seen it. While he was describing it to her, Mrs. Davies broke in.

"I saw it—I picked it up off the floor; it was lying between the sofa and the table."

"And what did you do with it?"

"Why, dusted it, to be sure."

"But where did you put it?"

"On the table, I suppose."

Another search and no memorial.

"Somebody has taken it."

"But who? Has anybody been in this room since?"

"Plenty! You don't get much peace here, I should say; but Susan gave the order you were not to be disturbed."

"This won't do," thought Mr. Eden.—"Who has been here?" said he to the servant.

"Mr. Fry is the only one that came into this room."

"Mr. Fry!" said Mr. Eden with some surprise.

"Ay! ay!" cried Mrs. Davies. "I remember now there was an ill-looking fellow of that name here talking to me pretending you had promised him a book."

"But I did promise him a book."

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, he looked like a thief; perhaps he has—goodness gracious me! I hope there was no money in it," and Mrs. Davies lost her ruddy colour in a moment.

"No! no! It was only a letter, but of great importance."

Another violent search at the risk of shins and hands.

"That Fry has taken it. I never saw such a hang-dog looking fellow."

Mr. Eden was much vexed; but he had a trick of blaming himself—Heaven only knows where he caught it. "My own forgetfulness; even if the paper had not been lost, I had allowed post-time to go by, and Mr. Hawes will anticipate me with the Home Secretary." He sighed.

In so severe a struggle he was almost as reluctant to give an unfair advantage as to take one.

He ordered a fire in his little back-parlour; and with a sigh sat down to re-write his memorial, and to try and recover, if he could, the exact words, and save the next post, that left in the morning.

As Mr. Eden sat trying to recover the words of his memorial, Hawes was seated in Mr. Williams' study at Ashtown Park, concerting with that worthy magistrate the best way of turning the new chaplain out of —— Jail. He found no difficulty. Mr. Williams had two very strong prejudices—one in favour of Hawes personally, the other in favour of the system pursued this two years in that jail. Egotism was here too, and rendered these prejudices almost impregnable. Williams had turned out O'Connor and his milder system, and put in Hawes and his more rigorous one. Hawes was "my man—his system mine."

He told his story, and Williams burned to avenge his injured friend, whose patron and director he called himself, and whose tool he was.

"Nothing can be done until the twenty-fifth, when Palmer returns. We must be all there for an act of this importance. Do your duty as you always have, carry out the discipline, and send for me if he gives you any great annoyance in the meantime."

That zealous servant of Her Majesty, earnest Mr. Hawes, had never taken a day's holiday before. No man could accuse him of indolence, carelessness, or faint discharge of the task he had appointed himself. He perverted his duties too much to neglect them. He had been reluctant to leave the prison on a personal affair. The drive, however, was pleasant, and he returned freshened and animated by assurances of support from the magistrate.

As he strode across the prison-yard to inspect everything before going to his house, he felt invulnerable, and sneered at himself for the momentary uneasiness he had let a crack-brained parson give him. He went home; there was a nice

fire, a clean-swept hearth, a glittering brass kettle on the hob for making toddy, and three different kinds of spirits in huge cruets. For system reigned in the house as well as the jail, with this difference, that the house system was devoted to making self comfortable, the jail system to making others wretched.

He rang the bell. In came the servant with slippers and candles unlighted, for he was wont to sip his grog by firelight. He put on his slippers; then he mixed his grog; then he noticed a paper on the table, and putting it to the fire, he found it was sealed. So he lighted the candles and placed them a little behind him. Then he stirred his grog and sipped it, and placing it close beside him, leaned back with a grunt of satisfaction, opened the paper, read it first slowly, then all in a flutter, started up as if he was going to act upon some impulse, but the next moment sat down again and stared wildly, a picture of stupid consternation.

Meantime as Mr. Eden, with a heavy heart, was writing himself out—nauseous task—Susan stood before him with a colour like a rose. She was in a brown cloak, from under which she took out a basket brimful of little packages, some in blue, some in white paper.

"These are grits," said she, "and these are arrowroot."

"I know—one of the phases of the potato."

"Oh, for shame, Mr. Eden. Well, I never! And I posted your letter, sir."

"What letter? What letter?"

"The long one. I found it on the table."

"You don't mean you posted that letter?"

"Why, it was to go, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was to go; but it was wonderfully intelligent of you."

"La, Mr. Eden! don't talk so; you make me ashamed. Why, there was 'immediate' written on it in your own hand. Was I to wake you up to ask whether that meant it was to stay here immediate or go to London immediate?" Then she pondered a moment. "He thinks I am a fool," said she in quiet explanation, without a shade of surprise or anger.

"Well, Susan, my dear friend, you don't know what a service you have done me!"

Susan glittered with pleasure.

"There!" cried he, "you have spared me this most unpleasant task," and he flung his unfinished papers into a

basket. Mr. Eden congratulated himself in his way, *i.e.*, thanked Heaven Susan had come there; the next thing was, he had a twinge of conscience. "I half suspected Fry of taking it in the interest of Hawes, his friend. Poor Fry, who is a brute, but as honest a man as myself every bit. He shall have his book, at all events. I'll put his name on it, that I mayn't forget it again." Mr. Eden took the book from its shelf, wrapped it in paper, and wrote on the cover, "For Mr. Fry, from F. Eden." As the incidents of the day are ended, I may as well relate what this book was, and how Fry came to ask for it.

The book was "Uncle Tom," a story which discusses the largest human topic that ever can arise; for the human race is bisected into black and white. Nowadays, a huge subject greatly treated receives justice from the public, and "Uncle Tom" is written in many places with art, in all with red ink and with the biceps muscle.

Great by theme, and great by skill, and greater by a writer's soul honestly flung into its pages, "Uncle Tom," to the surprise of many that twaddle traditional phrases in reviews and magazines about the art of fiction, and to the surprise of no man who knows anything about the art of fiction, was all the rage. Not to have read it was like not to have read the *Times* for a week.

Once or twice during the crucifixion of a prisoner, Mr. Eden had said bitterly to Fry, "Have you read 'Uncle Tom'?"

"No!' would Fry grunt.

But one day that the question was put to him, he asked with some appearance of interest, "Who is Uncle Tom?"

Then Mr. Eden began to reflect. "Who knows? The cases are in a great measure parallel. Prisoners are a tabooed class in England, as are blacks in some few of the United States. The lady writes better than I can talk. If she once seizes his sympathies by the wonderful power of fiction, she will touch his conscience through his heart. This disciple of Legree is fortified against me; Mrs. Stowe may take him off his guard." He said slily to Fry, "Not know 'Uncle Tom'! Why, it is a most interesting story—a charming story. There are things in it, too, that meet your case."

"Indeed, sir!"

"It is a book you will like. Shall I lend it you?"

"If you please, sir. Nights are drawing in now."

"I will, then."

And he would; but that frightful malady jaundice, amongst its other feats, impairs the patient's memory, and he forgot all about it. So Fry, whose curiosity was at last excited, came for the book. The rest we know.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mr. Hawes went about the prison next day morose and melancholy. He spoke to no one, and snapped those who spoke to him. He punished no prisoner all day, but he looked at them as a wolf at fortified sheep. He did not know what to do to avert the blow he had drawn so perseveringly on his own head. At one time he thought of writing to the Home Office and aspersing his accuser; then he regretted his visit to Ashtown Park. "What an unlucky dog I am! I go to see a man that I was sure of before I went, and while I am gone the—— parson steals a march on me. He will be at me! If I hadn't been a fool, I should have seen what a dangerous devil he is. No putting him out of temper! and no putting him out of heart! He will beat me! The zealous services of so many years won't save me with an ungrateful Government. I shall lose my stipend!"

For a while even stout-hearted, earnest Mr. Hawes was depressed with gloom and bitter foreboding; but he had a resource in trouble good Mr. Eden in similar case had not.

In the despondency of his soul he turned—to GROG.

Under the inspiration of that deity he prepared for a dogged defence. He would punish no more prisoners, let them do what they might, and then, if an inquiry should take place, he would be in case to show that by his past severities he had at last brought his patients to such perfection that weeks had elapsed without a single punishment. With this and the justices' good word he would weather the storm yet.

Thus passed three days without one of those assaults on prisoners he called punishment; but this enforced forbearance made him hate his victims. He swore at them, he threatened them all round, and with deep malice he gave open orders to punish which he secretly countermanded, so that in fact he did punish, for blows suspended over the head fall upon the soul. Thus he made his prisoners share his gloom. He was unhappy, he was dull, robbed

of an excitement which had become butter to his daily bread.

All prison life is dull. Chaplain, turnkeys, jailers—all who live in prisons are prisoners. Barren of mental resources; too stupid to see, far less read, the vast romance that lay all round him, every cell a volume; too mindless to comprehend his own grand situation on a salient of the State and of human nature, and to discern the sacred and endless pleasures to be gathered there, this unhappy dolt, flung into a lofty situation by shallow blockheads, who, like himself, saw in a jail nothing greater nor more than a "place of punishment," must still, like his prisoners, and the rest of us, have some excitement to keep him from going dead. What more natural than that such a nature should find its excitement in tormenting, and that by degrees this excitement should become first a habit, then a need? Growth is the nature of habit, not of one sort or another, but of all—even of an unnatural habit. Gin grows on a man—charity grows on a man—tobacco grows on a man—blood grows on a man.

At a period of the reign of terror the Parisians got to find a day weary without the guillotine. If by some immense fortuity there came a day when they were not sprinkled with innocent blood, the poor souls *s'ennuyaient.* This was not so much thirst for any particular liquid as the habit of excitement. Some months before, dancing, theatres, boulevards, etc., would have made shift to amuse these same hearts, as they did some months after when the red habit was worn out. Torture had grown upon stupid, earnest Hawes; it seasoned that white of egg, a mindless existence.

Oh! how dull he felt these three deplorable days, barren of groans, and white faces, and livid lips, and fellow-creatures shamming,* and the bucket.

Mr. Hawes had given a sulky order that the infirmary should be prepared for the sick, and now, on the afternoon of the third day, the surgeon had met him there by appointment.

"Will they get well any quicker here?" asked Hawes ironically.

"Why, certainly," replied the other.

Hawes gave a dissatisfied grunt.

"I hate moving prisoners out of the cells; but I suppose I shall get you into trouble if I don't."

* A generic term for swoonin or sickening, or going mad in a prison.

"Indeed!" said the other, with an inquiring air; "how?"

"Parson threatens you very hard for letting the sick ones lie in their cells," said Hawes slily. "But never mind, old boy—I shall stand your friend, and the justices mine. We shall beat him yet," said Hawes, assuming a firmness he did not feel, lest this man should fall away from him and perhaps bear witness against him.

"I think you have beat him already," replied the other calmly.

"What do you mean?"

"I have just come from Mr. Eden. He sent for me."

"What, isn't he well?"

"No."

"I wish he'd die! But there is no chance of that."

"Well, there is always a chance of a man dying who has got a bilious fever."

"Why, you don't mean he is seriously ill?" cried Hawes in excitement.

"I don't say that, but he has got a sharp attack."

Mr. Hawes examined the speaker's face. It was as legible as a book from the outside. He went from the subject to one or two indifferent matters, but he could not keep long from what was uppermost.

"Sawyer," said he, "you and I have always been good friends."

"Yes, Mr. Hawes."

"I have never been hard upon you. You ought to be here every day, but the pay is small, and I have never insisted on it, because, I said, he can't afford to leave patients that pay."

"No, Mr. Hawes, and I am much obliged to you."

"Are you? Then tell me—between ourselves now—how ill is he?"

"He has got bilious fever consequent upon jaundice."

Hawes lowered his voice. "Is he in danger?"

"In danger? Why, no, not at present."

"Oh, then it is only an indisposition after all."

"It is a great deal more than that—it is fever and bile."

"Can't you tell me in two words how ill he is?"

"Not till I see how the case turns."

"When will you be able to say, then?"

"When the disorder declares itself more fully."

Hawes exploded in an oath. "You humbugs of

doctors couldn't speak plain to save yourselves from hanging."

There was some truth in this ill-natured excuse. After fifteen years given to the science of obscurity, Mr. Sawyer literally could not speak plain all in one moment.

The next morning there was no service in the chapel, the chaplain was in bed. This spoke for itself, and Hawes wore a grim satisfaction at the announcement.

But this was not all. In the afternoon came a letter from Mr. Williams with a large inclosure signed by Her Majesty's secretary's secretary, and written by her secretary's secretary's secretary. Its precise contents will be related elsewhere. Its tendency may be gathered from this. Hawes had no sooner read it, than exultation painted itself on his countenance.

"Close the infirmary, and bring me the key. And you, Fry, put these numbers on the cranks to-morrow." He scribbled with his pencil, and gave him a long list of the prescribed.

No Mr. Eden shone now upon Robinson's solitude. He waited, and waited, and hoped till the day ended, but no! The next day the same thing. He longed for Mr. Eden's hour to come; it came, but not with it came his one bit of sunshine, his excitement, his amusement, his consolation, his friend, his brother, his all. And so one heavy day succeeded another, and Robinson became fretful and very, very sad. One day as he sat disconsolate and foreboding in his cell, he heard a stranger's voice talking to Fry outside: and what was more strange, Fry appeared to be inviting this person to inspect the cells. The next moment his door was opened, and a figure peeped timidly into the cell from behind Fry, whose arm she clutched in some anxiety. Robinson looked up, it was Susan Merton. She did not instantly know him in his prison dress and his curly hair cut short; he hung his head, and this action, and the recognition it implied, made her recognise him. "Oh!" cried she, "it is Mr. Robinson!"

The thief turned his face to the wall. Even he was ashamed before one who had known him as Mr. Robinson; but the next moment he got up and said earnestly, "Pray, Miss Merton, do me a favour—you had always a kind heart. Ask that man what has become of Mr. Eden—he will answer you."

"Mr. Robinson," cried Susan, "I have no need to ask

Mr. Fry. I am staying at Mr. Eden's house. He is very ill, Mr. Robinson."

"Ah! I feared as much; he never would have deserted me else. What is the trouble?"

"You may well say trouble! it is the prison that has fretted him to death," cried Susan half-bitterly, half-sorrowfully.

"But he will get well! it is not serious?" inquired Robinson anxiously. Fry pricked his ears.

"He is very ill, Mr. Robinson," and Susan sighed heavily.

"I'll pray for him. He has taught me to pray—all the poor fellows will pray for him that know how. Miss Merton, good for nothing as I am, I would die for Mr. Eden this minute if I could save his life by it."

Susan thought of this speech afterwards. Now she but said, "I will tell him what you say."

"And won't you bring me one word back from his dear mouth?"

"Yes, I will. Good-bye, Mr. Robinson."

Robinson tried to say good-bye, but it stuck in his throat. Susan retired, and the cell seemed darker than ever.

Mr. Eden lay stricken with fever. He had been what most of us would have called ill long before this. The day of Carter's crucifixion was a fatal day to him. On that day, for the first time, he saw a crucifixion without being sick after it. The poor soul congratulated himself so on this; but there is reason to think that same sickness acted as a safety-valve to his nature; when it ceased, the bile overflowed and mixed with his blood, producing that horrible complaint, jaundice. Even then, if the causes of grief and wrong had ceased, he might perhaps have had no dangerous attack; but everything was against him—constant grief, constant worry, and constant preternatural exertions to sustain others while drooping himself. Even those violent efforts of will by which he thrust back for a time the approaches of his malady told heavily upon him at last. The thorough-bred horse ran much longer than a cocktail would, but he could not run for ever.

He lay unshaven, hollow-eyed, and sallow; Mrs. Davies and Susan watched him by turns, except when he compelled them to go and take a little rest or amusement. The poor thing's thoughts were never on himself, even when he was light-headed, and this was often, though not for long together. It was generally his poor prisoners, and what he was going to do for them.

This is how Susan Merton came to visit Robinson. One day, seeing his great interest in all that concerned the prison, and remembering there was a book addressed to one of the officers, Susan, who longed to do something, however small, to please him, determined to take this book to its destination. Leaving Mrs. Davies with a strict injunction not to stir from Mr. Eden's room till she came back, she went to the prison and knocked timidly at the great door. It was opened instantly, and, as Susan fancied, fiercely, by a burly figure. Susan, suppressing an inclination to run away, asked tremulously—

"Does Mr. Fry live here?"

"Yes."

"Can I speak to him?"

"Yes. Come in, miss."

Susan stepped in. The man slammed the door.

Susan wished herself on its other side.

"My name is Fry: what is your pleasure with me?"

"Mr. Fry, I am so glad I have found you. I am come here from a friend of yours."

"From a friend of mine?? !!" said Fry, with a mystified air.

"Yes; from Mr. Eden. Here is the book, Mr. Fry; poor Mr. Eden could not bring it you himself, but you see he has written your name on the cover with his own hand."

Fry took the book from Susan's hand, and in so doing observed that she was lovely; so, to make her a return for bringing him "Uncle Tom," and for being so pretty, Fry for once in his life felt generous, and repaid her by volunteering to show her the prison—indulgent Fry!

To his surprise Susan did not jump at this remuneration. On the contrary, she said hastily, "Oh no! no! no!"

Then, seeing by his face that her new acquaintance thought her a madwoman, she added—

"That is, yes! I think I should like to see it a little—a very little—but if I do, you must keep close by me, Mr. Fry."

"Why, of course I shall keep with you," replied Fry somewhat contemptuously. "No strangers admitted except in company of an officer."

Susan still hung fire a little.

"But you mustn't go to show me the very wicked ones."

"Why, they are all pretty much of a muchness, for that."

"I mean the murderers—I couldn't bear such a sight."

"Got none," said Fry sorrowfully; "parted with the last of that sort four months ago—up at eight, down at nine—you understand, miss."

Happily Susan did not understand this brutal allusion; and, not to show her ignorance, she said nothing, but passed to a second stipulation—

"And, Mr. Fry, I know the men that set fire to Farmer Dean's ricks are in this jail; I won't see them; they would give me such a turn, for that seems to me the next crime after murder, to destroy the crops after the very weather has spared them."

Fry smiled superior; then he said sarcastically: "Don't you be frightened; some of our lot are beauties; your friend the parson is as fond of some of 'em as a cow is of her calf."

"Oh, then, show me those ones."

Fry took her to one or two cells. Whenever he opened a cell door she always clutched him on both ribs, and this tickled Fry, so did her simplicity.

At last he came to Robinson's cell.

"In here there is a sulky chap."

"Oh, then, let us go on to the next."

"But this is one his reverence is uncommon fond of," said Fry, with a sneer and a chuckle; so he flung open the door, and if the man had not hung his head, Susan would hardly have recognised in his uniform corduroy and close-cropped hair the vulgar Adonis who had sat glittering opposite her at table the last time they met.

After the interview which I have described, Susan gratified Fry by praising the beautiful cleanliness of the prison, and returned, leaving a pleasant impression even on this rough hide and "Uncle Tom" behind her.

When she got home she found her patient calm, but languid.

While she was relating her encounter with Robinson, and her previous acquaintance with him, the knock of a born fool at a sick man's door made them all start. It was Rutila with a long letter bearing an ample seal.

Mr. Eden took it with brightening eye, read it, and ground it almost convulsively in his hand. "Asses!" cried he; but the next moment he groaned and bowed his head. Her Majesty's secretary's secretary's secretary had written to tell him that his appeal for an inquiry had travelled out of the regular course; it ought to have been made in the first instance to the visiting justices, whose business it was

to conduct such inquiries, and that it lay with these visiting justices to apply to the Home Office for an extraordinary inquiry if they found they could not deal with the facts in the usual way. The Office, therefore, had sent copies of his memorial to each of the visiting justices, who, at their next inspection of the jail, would examine into the alleged facts, and had been requested to insert the results in their periodical report.

Mr. Eden sat up in bed, his eye glittering. "Bring me my writing-desk."

It was put on the bed before him, but with many kind injunctions not to worry himself. He promised faithfully. He wrote to the Home Office in this style :—

"A question of life and death cannot be played with as you have inconsiderately proposed; nor can a higher jurisdiction transfer an appeal to a lower one without the appellant's consent. Such a course is still more out of order when the higher judge is a salaried servant of the State and the lower ones are amateurs. This was so self-evident that I did not step out of the direct line to cast reflections upon unpaid servants. You have not seen what is self evident—you drive me therefore to explanations.

"I offered you evidence that this jailer is a felon, who has hoodwinked the visiting justices and has deceived you. But between you and the justices is this essential difference; they have been hoodwinked in spite of their own eyes, their own ears, and contact with that mass of living and dying evidence, the prisoners. You have been deceived without a single opportunity of learning the truth.

"Therefore I appealed, and do appeal, not to convicted incompetency, but to those whose incompetency remains to be proved. Perhaps you will understand me better if I put it thus: I still accuse the jailer of more than a hundred felonious assaults upon prisoners, of attacks upon their lives by physical torture, by hunger, thirst, preposterous confinement in dark dungeons, and other illegal practices; and I now advance another step, and accuse the visiting justices of gross dereliction of their duty, of neglecting to ascertain the real practice of the jailer in some points, and in others of encouraging, aiding, and abetting him in open violations of the prison-rules, printed and issued by Act of Parliament. Of these rules, which are the jail code, I send you a copy. I note the practices of the jail by the side of the rules of the jail; by comparing the two you may calculate

the amount of lawless cruelty perpetrated here in each single day; then ask yourself whether an honest man who is on the spot can wait four or five months till justice, crippled by routine, comes hobbling instead of sweeping to their relief.

"For Heaven's sake, bring to bear upon a matter vital to the State one half the intelligence, zeal, and sense of responsibility you will throw this evening into some ambiguous question of fleeting policy or speculative finance. Here are one hundred and eighty souls to whose correction, cure, and protection the State is pledged. No one of all these lives is safe a single day. In six weeks I have saved two lives that were gone but for me. I am now sick and enfeebled by the exertions I have had to make to save lives, and am in no condition to arrest the progress of destruction. I tell you that more lives will fall if you do not come to my aid at once; and for every head that falls from this hour I hold you responsible to God and the State.

"If I fail to prove my several accusations, as a matter of course I shall be dismissed from my office deservedly; and this personal risk entitles me not only to petition for, but to demand an inquiry into the practice of —— Jail. And in the Queen's name, whose salaried servant I am, I do demand it on the instant and on the spot."

Thus did flesh and blood address gutta-percha.

The excitement of writing this letter did the patient no good. A reaction came, and that night his kind nurses were seriously alarmed about him. They sent for the surgeon, who felt his pulse and his skin, and looked grave. However, he told them there was no immediate danger, and wrote a fresh prescription.

The patient would eat nothing but bread and water and gruel, but he took all the doctor's medicines, which were raking ones; only at each visit and prescription he cross-examined him as to what effect he hoped to produce by his prescription, and compared the man's expectations with the result.

This process soon brought him to the suspicion that in his case Æsculapius' science was guess-work. But we go on hoping and hoping something from traditional remedies, even when they fail and fail and fail before our eyes.

He was often light-headed, and vented schemes of charity and benevolence, ludicrous by their unearthly grandeur. One day he was more than light-headed - he was delirious, and frightened his kind nurses; and to this delirium

N.E.L. He almost stumbled over a corpse. Page 261.

succeeded great feebleness, and this day, for the first time, Susan made up her mind that it was Heaven's will earth should lose this man, of whom, in truth, earth was scarce worthy. She came to his side and said tenderly, "Let me do something for you. Shall I read to you, or sing you a hymn?" Her voice had often soothed and done him good. "Tell me what can I do for you?"

The man smiled gratefully, then looked imploringly in her eyes, and said, "Dear Susan, go for me into the prison, and pay Strutt and Robinson each a visit. Strutt the longest, he is the oldest. Poor things! they miss me sadly."

Susan made no foolish objection. She did what she was asked, and came back and told him all they had said and all she had said; and how kind everybody was to her in the prison; and how they had all asked how he was to-day.

"They are very good," said he feebly.

Soon after he dozed; and Susan, who always wore a cheerful look to his face, could now yield to her real feelings.

She sat at some little distance from the bed and tried to work, and every now and then looked up to watch him, and again and again her eyes were blinded; and she laid down her work, for her heart said to her, "A few short days and you will see him no more."

Mrs. Davies, too, was grave and sad. She had made the house neat and clean from cellar to garret, and now he who should have enjoyed it lay there sick unto death.

"Susan," said she, "I doubt I have been sent here to set his house in order against his——"

"Oh, don't tell me that," cried Susan, and she burst into a fit of sobbing, for Mrs. Davies had harped her own fear.

"Take care; he is waking, Susan. He must not see us."

"Oh no!" and the next moment she was by her patient's side with a cheerful look and voice and manner, well calculated to keep any male heart from sinking, sick or well.

Heavy heart and hopeful face! such a nurse was Susan Merton. This kind deception became more difficult every day. Her patient wasted and wasted; and the anxious look that is often seen on a death-stricken man's face showed itself. Mrs. Davies saw it, and Susan saw it; but the sick man himself as yet had never spoken of his disease,

and both Mrs. Davies and Susan often wondered that he did not seem to see his real state.

But one day it so happened that he was light-headed and greatly excited, holding a conversation. His eye was flashing, and he spoke in bursts, and then stopped awhile and seemed to be listening in irritation to some arguments with which he did not agree. The enthusiast was building a prison in the air—a prison with a farm, a school, and a manufactory attached. Here were to be combined the good points of every system, and others of his own.

"Yes," said he, in answer to his imaginary companion, "there shall be both separation and silence for those whose moral case it suits—for all perhaps at first—but not for all always. Away with your Morrison's pill-system—your childish monotony of moral treatment in cases varying and sometimes opposed.

"Yes, but I would. I would allow a degree of intercourse between such as were disposed to confirm each other in good. Watch them? why, of course—and closely too.

"Intelligent labour for every creature in the place. No tickets-of-leave to let the hypocritical or self-deceiving ones loose upon the world.

"No; I test their repentance first with a little liberty.

"How? Why, fly them with a string before I let them fly free!

"Occupation, provided outside the prison-gates; instead of ticket-of-leave, let the candidate work there on parole and come into the prison at night.

"Some will break parole and run away? All the better. Then you know their real character. Telegraph them. You began by photographing them—send their likenesses to every town—catch them—cell them.

"Indeed! And pray what would these same men have done had you given them the ticket-of-leave instead?

"By the present plan your pseudo-convert commits a dozen crimes before his hypocrisy is suspected; by ours a single offence warns you and arms you against him.

"Systems avail less than is supposed. For good or ill, all depends on your men—not your machinery.

"We have got rid of the old patch that rotted our new garment. When I first was chaplain of a jail——"

His mind had gone forward some years.

"Then we were mad—thought a new system could be worked by men of the past, by jailers and turnkeys

belonging to the dark and brutal age that came before ours.

"Those dark days are passed. Now we have really a governor and warders instead of jailers and turnkeys. The nation has discovered these are high offices, not mean ones.

"Yes, Lepel, yes! Our officers are men picked out of all England for intelligence and humanity. They co-operate with me. Our jail is one of the nation's eyes—it is a school, thank Heaven, it is not a dungeon!—I am in bed!"

With these last words he had come to himself, and oh! the sad contrast! Butcherly blockheads in these high places, and himself lying sick and powerless, unable to lift a hand for the cause he loved. The sigh that burst from him seemed to tear his very heart; but the very next moment he put his hands humbly together and said, "God's will be done!" Yet one big tear gathered in his lion eye, and spite of all trickled down his cheek while he said, "God's will be done."

Susan saw it, and turned quickly away and hid her face; but he called her, and though his lip quivered, his voice was pretty firm.

"Dear friend, God can always find instruments. The good work will be done, though not by me."

So then Susan judged by these few words, and the tear that trickled from his closed eyes, that he saw what others saw, and did not look to live now.

She left the room in haste, not to agitate him by the sorrow she could no longer restrain or conceal. The patient lay quiet, languidly dozing.

Now about four o'clock in the afternoon the surgeon came to the door; but what surprised Susan was that a man accompanied him whom she only just knew by sight, and who had never been there before—the turnkey Hodges. The pair spoke together in a low tone, and Susan, who was looking down from an upper window, could not hear what they said; but the discussion lasted a minute or two before they rang the bell. Susan came down herself and admitted them. But as she was leading the way upstairs her aunt suddenly bounced out of the parlour looking unaccountably red, and said—

"I will go up with them, Susan."

Susan said, "If you like, aunt," but felt some little surprise at Mrs. Davies' brisk manner.

At the sick man's door Mrs. Davies paused, and said drily, with a look at Hodges, "Who shall I say is come with you?"

"Mr. Hodges, one of the warders, is come to inquire after his reverence's health," replied the surgeon smoothly.

"I must ask him first whether he will receive a stranger."

"Admit him," was Mr. Eden's answer.

The men entered the room, and were welcomed with a kind but feeble smile from the sick man.

"Sit down, Hodges."

The surgeon felt his pulse and wrote a prescription; for it is a tradition of the elders that at each visit the doctor must do some overt act of medicine. After this he asked the patient how he felt. Mr. Eden turned an eloquent look upon him in reply.

"I must speak to Hodges," said he. "Come near me, Hodges," said he in a kind voice; "perhaps I may not have many more opportunities of giving you a word of friendly exhortation."

Here a short, dissatisfied, contemptuous grunt was heard at the window-seat.

"Did you speak, Mrs. Davies?"

"No, I didn't," was the somewhat sharp reply.

"We should improve every occasion, Mrs. Davies, and I want this poor man to know that a dying man may feel happy and hope everything from God's love and mercy, if he has loved and pitied his brothers and sisters of Adam's race."

When he called himself a dying man, Hodges, who was looking uncomfortable and at the floor, raised his head, and the surgeon and he interchanged a rapid look; it was observed, though not by Mr. Eden.

That gentleman seeing Hodges wear an abashed look which he misunderstood, and aiming to improve him for the future, not punish him for the past, said, "But first let me thank you for coming to see me," and with these words he put his hand out of the bed with a kind smile to Hodges. His gentle intention was roughly interrupted; Mrs. Davies flung down her work and came like a flaming turkey-cock across the floor in a moment, and seized his arm and flung it back into the bed.

"No, ye don't! ye shan't give your hand to any such rubbish."

"Mrs. Davies!"

"Yes, Mrs. Davies; you don't know what they've come here for—I overheard ye at the door! You have got an enemy in that filthy jail, haven't you, sir? Well, this man comes from him to see how bad you are—they were colloguing together backwards and forwards ever so long, and I heard 'em—it is not out of any kindness or good-will in the world. Now suppose you march out the way you came in," screamed Mrs. Davies.

"Mrs. Davies, be quiet, and let me speak!"

"Of course I will, sir," said the woman, with a ludicrously sudden calm and coaxing tone.

There was a silence; Mr. Eden eyed the men. Small guilt peeped from them by its usual little signs.

Mr. Eden's lip curled magnificently.

"So you did not come to see me—you were sent by that man. (Mrs. Davies, be quiet; curiosity is not a crime, like torturing the defenceless.) Mr. Hawes sent you that you might tell him how soon his victims are like to lose their only earthly defender."

The men coloured and stammered; Mrs. Davies covered her face with her apron and rocked herself on her chair.

Mr. Eden flowed gently on.

"Tell your master that I have settled all my worldly affairs, and caused all my trifling debts to be paid.

"Tell him that I have made my will! (I have provided in it for the turnkey Evans—he will know why.)

"Tell him you found my cheeks fallen away, my eye hollow, and my face squalid.

"Tell him my Bible was by my side, and even the prison was mingling with other memories as I drifted from earth and all its thorns and tears. All was blunted but the Christian's faith and trust in his Redeemer.

"Tell him there is a cold dew upon my forehead.

"Tell him that you found me by the side of the river Jordan, looking across the cold river to the heavenly land, where they who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb walk in white garments, and seem even as I gaze to welcome and beckon me to join them.

"And then tell him," cried he, in a new voice like a flash of lightning, "that he has brought me back to earth. You have come and reminded me that if I die a wolf is waiting to tear my sheep. I thank you, and I tell you," roared he, "as the Lord liveth and as my soul liveth, I will not die but live—and do the Lord's work—and put

my foot yet on that caitiff's neck who sent you to inspect my decaying body, you poor tools—THE DOOR!"

He was up in the bed by magic, towering above them all, and he pointed to the door with a tremendous gesture and an eye that flamed. Mrs. Davies caught the electric spark; in a moment she tore the door open, and the pair bundled down the stairs before that terrible eye and finger.

"Susan! Susan!" Susan heard his elevated voice, and came running in in great anxiety.

"They say there is no such thing as friendship between a man and a woman. Prove to me this is a falsehood."

"It is, sir."

"Do me a service."

"Ah! what is it?"

"Go a journey for me."

"I will go all round England for you, Mr. Eden," cried the girl, panting and flushing.

"My writing-desk! It is to a village sixty miles from this, but you will be there in four hours. In that village lives the man who can cure me if anyone can."

"What will you take with you?" asked Mrs. Davies, all in a bustle.

"A comb and brush, and a chemise."

"I'll have them down in a twinkling."

The note was written.

"Take this to his house, see him, tell him the truth, and bring him with you to-morrow. It will be fifty pounds out of his pocket to leave his patients, but I think he will come. Oh yes, he will come—for auld lang syne."

"Good-bye, Mr. Eden. God bless you, aunt. I want to be gone; I shall bring him, if I have to carry him in my arms." And with these words Susan was gone.

"Now, good Mrs. Davies, give me the Bible. Often has that book soothed the torn nerves as well as the bleeding heart. And let no one come here to grieve or vex me for twenty-four hours; and fling that man's draught away; I want to live."

Mrs. Davies had heard Hodges and Fry aright. Mr. Eden, by her clue, had interpreted the visit aright with this exception, that he overrated his own importance in Mr. Hawes' eyes. For Hawes mocked at the chaplain's appeal to the Home Office ever since the Office had made his tools the virtual referees.

Still a shade of uneasiness remained. During the progress

of this long duel Eden had let fall two disagreeable hints; one was that he would spend a thousand pounds in setting such prisoners as survived Hawes' discipline to indict him, and the other that he would appeal to the public press.

This last threat had touched our man of brass; for if there is one thing upon earth that another thing does not like, your moral malefactor, who happens to be out of the law's reach, hates and shivers at the New Bailey in Printing-House Yard. So, upon the whole, Mr. Hawes thought that the best thing Mr. Eden could do would be to go to heaven without any more fuss.

"Yes, that will be the best for all parties."

He often questioned the doctor in his blunt way how soon the desired event might be expected to come off, if at all. The doctor still answered *per ambages, ut mos oraculis.*

"I see I must go myself. No, I won't; I'll send Fry. Ah! here is Hodges. Go and see the parson, and come back and tell me whether he is like to live or like to die. Mr. Sawyer here can't speak English about a patient; he would do it to oblige me if he could, but —— him, he can't."

"Don't much like the job," demurred Hodges sulkily.

"What matters what you like? You must all do things you don't like in a prison, or get into trouble."

More accustomed to obey than to reflect, Hodges yielded, but at Mr. Eden's very door, his commander being now out of sight, his reluctance revived; and this led to an amicable discussion, in which the surgeon made him observe how very ferocious and impatient of opposition the governor had lately become.

"He can get either of us dismissed if we offend him."

So the pair of cowards did what they were bid, and got themselves trod upon a bit. It only remains to be said, that as they trudged back together a little venom worked in their little hearts. They hated both duellists—one for treating them like dogs, the other for sending them where they had got treated like dogs; and they disliked each other for seeing them treated like dogs. One bitterness they escaped it did not occur to them to hate themselves for being dogs.

If you force a strong-willed stick out of its bent, with what fury it flies back *ad statum quo*, or a little farther,

when the coercion is removed. So hard-grained Hawes, his fears of the higher powers removed, returned with a spring to his intermitted habits.

There was no incarnate obstacle now to "discipline." There was a provisional chaplain, but that chaplain was worthy Mr. Jones, who, having visited the town for a month, had consented for a week or two to supply the sick man's place, and did supply it so far as a good clock can replace a man. Viewing himself now as something between an officer and a guest, he was less likely to show fight than ever.

Earnest Hawes pilloried, flung into black dungeons, stole beds and gas-light, crushed souls with mysterious threats, and bodies with a horrible mixture of those tortures that madden and those other tortures that exhaust. No Spanish Inquisitor was ever a greater adept at this double move than earnest Hawes.

The means by which he could make any prisoner appear refractory have already been described, but in the case of one stout fellow whom he wanted to discipline, he now went a step further: he slipped into the yard and slily clogged one of the cranks with a weight which he inserted inside the box and attached to the machinery. This contrivance would have beaten Hercules, and made him seem idle to anyone not in the secret. In short, this little blockhead bade fair to become one of Mr. Carlyle's great men. He combined the earnest sneak with the earnest butcher.

Barbarous times are not wholly expunged, as book-makers affect to fear. Legislators, moralists, and writers (I don't include book-makers under that title) try to clap their extinguishers on them with God's help; but they still contrive to shoot some lurid specimens of themselves into civilised epochs. Such a black ray of the narrow, self-deceiving, stupid, bloody past was earnest Hawes.

Not a tithe of his exploits can be recorded here, for though he played upon many souls and bodies, he repeated the same notes—hunger, thirst, the blackness of darkness, crucifixion, solitude, loss of sleep—so that a description of all his feats would be a catalogue of names subjected to the above tortures, and be dry as well as revolting.

I shall describe, therefore, only the grand result of all, and a case or two that varied by a shade the monotony of discipline. He kept one poor lad without any food at all from Saturday morning till Sunday at twelve o'clock, and

made him work; and for his Sunday dinner gave the famished wretch six ounces of bread and a can of water. He strapped one prisoner up in the pillory for twenty-four hours, and directed him to be fed in it. This prisoner had a short neck, and the cruel collar would not let him eat, so that the tortures of Tantalus were added to crucifixion. The earnest beast put a child of eleven years old into a strait waistcoat for three days, then kept him three days on bread and water, and robbed him of his bed and his gas for fourteen days.

We none of us know the meaning of these little punishments so vast beyond our experience; but in order to catch a glimmer of the meaning of the last item, we must remember first that the cells admit but little light, and that the gas is the prisoner's sunlight for the hour or two of rest from hard toil that he is allowed before he is ordered to bed, and next that a prisoner has but two sets of clothes; those he stands upright in, and his bed-clothes; these are rolled up inside the bed every morning. When, therefore, a prisoner was robbed of his bed, he was robbed of the means of keeping himself warm, as well as of that rest without which life soon comes to a full stop.

Having victimised this child's tender body as aforesaid, Mr. Hawes made a cut at his soul. He stopped his chapel.

One ought not to laugh at a worm coming between another worm and his God, and saying, "No! you shall not hear of God to-day—you have displeased a functionary whose discipline takes precedence of His;" and it is to be observed, that though this blockhead did not in one sense comprehend the nature of his own impious act any more than a Hottentot would, yet as broad as he saw he saw keenly. The one-ideaed man wanted to punish; and deprivation of chapel is a bitter punishment to a prisoner under the separate and silent system.

And lay this down as a rule: whenever in this tale a punishment is recorded as having been inflicted by Hawes, however light it may appear to you who never felt it, bring your intelligence to bear on it—weigh the other conditions of a prisoner's miserable existence it was added to, and in every case you will find it was a blow with a sledge-hammer; in short, to comprehend Hawes and his fraternity, it is necessary to make a mental effort and comprehend the meaning of the word "accumulation."

The first execution of biped Carter took place about a week after Mr. Eden was laid prostrate.

It is not generally very difficult to outwit an imbecile, and the governor enmeshed Carter, made him out refractory, and crucified him. The poor soul did not hollo at first, for he remembered they had not cut his throat the last time, as he thought they were going to do (he had seen a pig first made fast, then stuck). But when the bitter cramps came on, he began to howl and cry most frightfully; so that Hawes, who was talking to the surgeon in the centre of the building, started and came at once to the place. Mr. Sawyer came with him. They tried different ways of quieting him, in vain. They went to a distance, as Mr. Eden had suggested, but it was no use; he was howling now from pain, not fear.

"Gag him!" roared Hawes, "it is scandalous; I hate a noise."

"Better loose him," suggested the surgeon.

Hawes blighted him with a look. "What! and let him beat me!"

"There is no gag in the prison," said Fry.

"A pretty prison without a gag in it!" said Hawes; the only reflection he was ever heard to cast on his model jail; then with sudden ferocity he turned on Sawyer. "What is the use of you? Don't you know anything for your money? Can't all your science stop this brute's windpipe, —— you!"

Science thus blandly invoked came to the aid of inhumanity.

"Humph! have you got any salt?"

"Salt!" roared Hawes, "what is the use of salt? Oh ay, I see! run and get a pound, and look sharp with it.'

They brought the salt.

"Now, will you hold your noise?—then, give it him."

The scientific operator watched his opportunity, and when the poor biped's mouth was open howling, crammed a handful of salt into it. He spat it out as well as he could, but some of it, dissolved by the saliva, found its way down his throat. The look of amazement and distress that followed was most amusing to the operators.

"That was a good idea, doctor," cried Hawes.

The triumph was premature. Carter's cries were choked for a moment by his astonishment. But the next, finding a fresh torture added to the first, he howled louder than

ever. Then the governor seized the salt, powdered a good handful, and avoiding his teeth, crammed it suddenly into the poor creature's mouth. He spat it furiously out, and the brine fell like sea-spray upon all the operators, especially on Hawes, who swore at the biped, and called him a beast, and promised him a long spell of the cross for his nastiness. After Hawes, Fry must take his turn; and so now these three creatures, to whom Heaven had given reason, combined their strength and their sacred reason to torture and degrade one of those whom the French call *bêtes du bon Dieu*—a Heaven-afflicted, Heaven-pitied brother.

They respected neither the hapless wight nor his Owner. Whenever he opened his mouth, with the instinct that makes animals proclaim their hurts and appeal for pity on the chance of a heart being within hearing, then did these show their sense of his appeal thus: one of the party crammed the stinging salt down his throat; the others watched him, and kept clear of the brine that he spat vehemently out, and a loud report of laughter followed instantly each wild grimace, and convulsion of fear and torture. Thus they employed their reason, and flouted as well as tortured him who had less.

"Haw! haw! haw! haw! haw!"

No lightning came down from heaven upon these merry souls. The idiot's spittle did not burn them when it fell on them. ALL THE WORSE FOR THEM!

They left Carter for hours in the pillory, and soon a violent thirst was added to his sufferings. Prolonged pain brings on cruel thirst, and many a poor fellow suffered horribly from it during the last hours of his pillory. But in this case the salt he had swallowed made it more vehement. Most men go through life and never know thirst. It is a frightful torture, as any novice would have learned who had seen Carter at six in the evening of this cruel day. The poor wretch's throat was so parched he could hardly breathe; his eyes were all bloodshot, and his livid tongue lolled stringless and powerless out of his gasping mouth. He would have given diamonds for drops of water. The earnest man, going his rounds of duty, saw his pitiable state, and forbade relief till the number of hours he had appointed for his punishment should be completed. Discipline before all!

There was one man in the jail, just one, who could no longer view this barbarity unmoved. His heart had been

touched and his understanding awakened, and he saw these prodigies of cruelty in their true light. But he was afraid of Hawes, and unfortunately the others, by an instinct, felt their comrade was no longer one of them, and watched him closely; but his intelligence was awakened with his humanity.

After much thought he hit upon this: he took the works out of his watch—an old hunting-watch—and strolling into the yard, dipped the case into the bucket, then closed it; and soon after getting close to Carter, and between him and Fry, he affected to examine the prisoner's collar, and then hastily gave him a watchful of cold water. Carter sucked it with frightful avidity, and, small as the draught was, no mortal can say what consequences were averted by it.

Evans was dreadfully out of spirits. His ally lay dying and his enemy triumphed. He looked to be turned out of the jail at the next meeting of magistrates. But when he had given the idiot his watch to drink out of, an unwonted warmth and courage seemed to come into his heart.

This touch of humanity coming suddenly among the most hellish of all fiends, men of system, was like the little candle in a window that throws its beams so far when we are bewildered in a murky night; for the place was now a moral coal-hole. The dungeons at Rome that lie under the wing of Roderick Borgia's successors are not a more awful remnant of antiquity, or a fouler blot on the age, on the law, on the land, and on human nature.

A thick dark pall of silence and woe hung over its huge walls. If a voice was heard above a whisper, it was sure to be either a cry of anguish or a fierce command to inflict anguish. Two or three were crucified every day; the rest expected crucifixion from morning till night. No man felt safe an hour; no man had the means of averting punishment; all were at the mercy of a tyrant. Threats, frightful, fierce, and mysterious, hung like weights over every soul and body. Whenever a prisoner met an officer, he cowered and hurried, crouching by like a dog passing a man with a whip in his hand; and as he passed he trembled at the thunder of his own footsteps, and wished to Heaven they would not draw so much attention to him by ringing so clear through that huge silent tomb. When an officer met the governor, he tried to slip by with a hurried salute, lest he should be stopped, abused and sworn at.

The earnest man fell hardest upon the young; boys and children were favourite victims; but his favourites of all were poor Robinson and little Josephs. These were at the head of the long list he crucified, he parched, he famished, he robbed of prayer, of light, of rest, and hope. He disciplined the sick; he closed the infirmary again. That large room, furnished with comforts, nurses, and air, was an inconsistency.

"A new prison is a collection of cells," said Hawes. The infirmary was a spot in the sun. The exercise-yard in this prison was a twelve-box stable for creatures concluded to be wild beasts. The labour-yard was a fifteen-stall stable for ditto. The house of God an eighty-stalled stable, into which the wild beasts were dispersed for public worship made private. Here, in early days, before Hawes was ripe, they assembled apart and repeated prayers, and sang hymns on Sunday. But Hawes found out that though the men were stabled apart, their voices were refractory and mingled in the air, and with their voices their hearts might, who knows? He pointed this out to the justices, who shook their skulls and stopped the men's responses and hymns. These animals cut the choruses out of the English Liturgy with as little ceremony and as good effect as they would have cut the choruses out of Handel's "Messiah," if the theory they were working had been a musical instead of a moral one.

So far so good; but the infirmary had escaped Justice Shallow and Justice Woodcock. Hawes abolished that.

Discipline before all. Not because a fellow is sick is he to break discipline. So the sick lay in their narrow cells, gasping in vain for fresh air, gasping in vain for some cooling drink, or some little simple delicacy to incite their enfeebled appetite.

The dying were locked up at the fixed hour for locking up, and found dead at the fixed hour for opening. How they had died—no one knew. At what hour they had died—no one knew. Whether in some choking struggle a human hand might have saved them by changing a suffocating position or the like—no one knew.

But this all knew, that these our sinful brethren had died, not like men, but like vultures in the great desert. They were separated from their kith and kin, who, however brutal, would have said a kind word and done a tender thing or two for them at that awful hour; and nothing

allowed them in exchange, not even the routine attentions of a prison nurse; they were in darkness and alone when the king of terrors came to them and wrestled with them: all men had turned their backs on them, no creature near to wipe the dews of death, to put a cool hand to the brow, or soften the intensity of the last sad sigh that carried their souls from earth. Thus they passed away, punished lawlessly by the law till they succumbed, and then, since they were no longer food for torture, ignored by the law and abandoned by the human race.

They locked up one dying man at eight o'clock. At midnight the thirst of death came on him. He prayed for a drop of water, but there was none to hear him. Parched and gasping, the miserable man got out of bed and groped and groped for his tin mug, but before he could drink the death agony seized him.

When they unlocked him in the morning, they found him a corpse on the floor, with the mug in his hand, and the water spilled on the floor. They wrenched the prison property out of its dead hand, and flung the carcass itself upon the bed as if it had been the clay cast of a dog, not the remains of a man.

All was of a piece. The living tortured, the dying abandoned, the dead kicked out of the way. Of these three the living were the most unfortunate, and among the living Robinson and Josephs. Never since the days of Cain was existence made more bitter to two hapless creatures than to these—above all, to Josephs.

His day began thus: Between breakfast and dinner he was set five thousand revolutions of a heavy crank; when he could not do it, his dinner was taken away and a few crumbs of bread and a can of water given him instead. Between his bread-and-water time and six o'clock, if the famished, worn-out lad could not do five thousand more revolutions, and make up the previous deficiency, he was punished *ad libitum*. As the whole thing from first to last was beyond his powers, he never succeeded in performing these preposterous tasks. He was threatened, vilified, and tortured every day and every hour of it.

Human beings can bear great sufferings if you give them periods of ease between; and beneficent Nature allows for this, and when she means us to suffer short of death, she lashes us at intervals; were it otherwise, we should succumb under a tithe of what we suffer intermittently.

But Hawes, besides his cruelty, was a noodle. He belonged to a knot of theorists into whose hands the English jails are fast falling; a set of shallow dreamers, who being greater dunces and greater asses than four men out of every six that pass you in Fleet Street or Broadway at any hour, think themselves wiser than Nature and her Author. Josephs suffered, body and spirit, without intermission. The result was that his flesh withered on his bones; his eyes were dim, and seemed to lie at the bottom of two caverns; he crawled stiffly and slowly instead of walking. He was not sixteen years of age, yet Hawes had extinguished his youth and blotted out all its signs but one. Had you met this figure in the street, you would have said, "What, an old man and no beard?"

One day as Robinson happened to be washing the corridor with his beaver up, what he took for a small but aged man passed him, shambling stiffly, with joints stiffened by perpetual crucifixion and rheumatism, that had ensued from perpetually being wetted through. This figure had his beaver down: at sight of Robinson he started, and instantly went down on his knee and untied both shoe-strings; then while tying them again slowly he whispered, "Robinson, I am Josephs; don't look towards me."

Robinson, scrubbing the wall with more vigour than before, whispered, "How are they using you now, boy?"

"Hush! don't speak so loud. Robinson, they are killing me."

"The ruffians! They are trying all they know to kill me too."

"Fry coming."

"Hist!" said Robinson as Josephs crept away; and having scraped off a grain of whitewash with his nail, he made a little white mark on his trouser just above his calf for Josephs to know him by, should they meet next time with visors both down.

Josephs gave a slight and rapid signal of intelligence as he disappeared. Two days after this they met on the staircase. The boy, who now looked at every prisoner's trousers for the white mark, recognised Robinson at some distance, and began to speak before they met.

"I can't go on much longer like this."

"No more can I."

"I shall go to father."

"Why, where is he?"

"He is dead."

"I don't care how soon I go there either, but not till I have sent Hawes on before—not for all the world. Pass me, and then come back."

They met again.

"Keep up your heart, boy, till his reverence gets well or goes to heaven. If he lives, he will save us somehow. If he dies—I'll tell you a secret. I know where there is a brick I think I can loosen. I mean to smash that beast's skull with it, and then you will be all right, and my heart will feel like a prince."

"Oh, don't do that," said Josephs piteously. "Better for us he should murder us than we him."

"Murder!" cried Robinson contemptuously. And there was no time to say any more.

After this, many days passed before these two could get a syllable together. But one day after chapel, as the men were being told off to their several tasks, Robinson recognised the boy by his figure, and jogging his elbow, withdrew a little apart; Josephs followed him, and this time Robinson was the first speaker.

"We shall never see Mr. Eden alive again, boy," said he in a faltering voice. Then in a low, gloomy tone he muttered, "I have loosened the brick: the day I lose all hope, that day I send Hawes home." And the thief pointed towards the cellar.

"The day you have no more hope, Robinson? That day has come to me this fortnight and more. He tells me every day he will make my life hell to me, and I am sure it has been nothing else ever since I came here."

"Keep up your heart, boy; he hasn't long to live."

"He will live too long for me. I can't stay here any longer. You and I shan't often chat together again; perhaps never." "Don't talk so, laddie. Keep up your heart—for my sake."

One bitter tearing sob was all the reply. And so these two parted. This was just after breakfast. At dinner-time Josephs, not having performed an impossible task, was robbed of his dinner. A little bread and water was served out to him in the yard, and he was set on the crank again, with fearful menaces. In particular, Mr. Hawes repeated his favourite threat, "I'll make your life hell to you." Josephs groaned; but what could a boy of fifteen do, over-tasked and famished for a month past, and fitter now for a

hospital than for hard labour of any sort? At three o'clock his progress on the crank was so slow that Mr. Hawes ordered him to be crucified on the spot.

His obedient myrmidons for the fiftieth time seized the lad and crushed him in the jacket, throttled him in the collar, and pinned him to the wall, and this time, the first time for a long while, the prisoner remonstrated loudly.

"Why not kill me at once and put me out of my misery?"

"Hold your tongue."

"You know I can't do the task you set me. You know it as well as I do."

"Hold your tongue, you insolent young villain. Strap him tighter, Fry."

"Oh no! no! no! don't go to strap me tighter, or you will cut me in half—don't, Mr. Fry. I will hold my tongue, sir." Then he turned his mournful eyes on Hawes and said gently, "It can't last much longer, you know."

"It shall last till I break you, you obstinate, whining dog. You are hardly used, are you? Wait till to-morrow, I'll show you that I have only been playing with you as yet. But I have got a punishment in store for you that will make you wish you were in hell."

Hawes stood over the martyr, fiercely threatening him. The martyr shut his eyes. It seemed as though the enraged Hawes would end by striking him. He winced with his eyes. He could not wince with any other part of his body, so tight was it jammed together, and jammed against the wall.

Hawes, however, did but repeat his threat of some new torture on the morrow that should far eclipse all he had yet endured; and shaking his fist at his helpless body, left him with his torture.

One hour of bitter, racking, unremitting anguish had hardly rolled over this young head, ere his frame, weakened by famine and perpetual violence, began to give the usual signs that he would soon sham—swoon, we call it, when it occurs to any but a prisoner.

As my readers have never been in Mr. Hawes' man-press, and as attempts have been made to impose on the inexperience of the public, and represent the man-press as restriction, not torture, I will shortly explain why sooner or later all the men that were crucified in it ended by shamming.

Were you ever seized at night with a violent cramp? Then you have instantly, with a sort of wild and alarmed rapidity, changed the posture which had cramped you; ay, though the night was ever so cold, you have sprung out of bed sooner that lie cramped. If the cramp would not go in less than half a minute, that half-minute was long and bitter. As for existing cramped half an hour, that you never thought possible. Imagine now the severest cramp you ever felt artificially prolonged for hours and hours. Imagine yourself cramped in a vice, no part of you movable a hair's-breadth, except your hair and your eyelids. Imagine the fierce cramp growing and growing, and rising like a tide of agony higher and higher above nature's endurance, and you will cease to wonder that a man always sunk under Hawes' man-press. Now, then, add to the cramp a high circular saw raking the throat, jacket straps cutting and burning the flesh of the back; add to this the freezing of the blood in the body, deprived so long of all motion whatever (for motion of some sort or degree is a condition of vitality), and a new and far more rational wonder arises, that any man could be half an hour cut, sawed, cramped, Mazeppa'd thus, without shamming—still less be four, six, eight hours in it, and come out a living man.

The young martyr's lips were turning blue, his face was twitching convulsively, when a word was unexpectedly put in for him by a bystander.

The turnkey Evans had been half-sullenly, half-sorrowfully watching him for some minutes past.

A month or two ago the lips of a prisoner turning blue and his skin twitching told Evans nothing. He saw these things without seeing them. He was cruel from stupidity—from blockhead to butcher there is but a step. Like the English public, he *realised* nothing where prisoners were concerned. But Mr. Eden had awakened his intelligence, and his heart waked with it naturally.

Now when he saw lips turning blue, and eyes rolling in sad despair, and skin twitching convulsively, it occurred to him, "This creature must be suffering very badly," and the next step was, "Let me see what is hurting him so."

Evans now stood over Josephs and examined him. "Mr. Fry," said he doggedly, "is not this overdoing it?"

"What d'ye mean? we are to obey orders, I suppose?"

"Of course, but there was no need to draw the jacket

strap so tight as all this. Boy's bellows can't hardly work for 'em."

He now passed his hand round the hollow of the lad's back.

"I thought so," cried he; "I can't get my finger between the straps and the poor fellow's flesh, and, good Heavens, I can feel the skin rising like a ridge on each side of the straps; it is a black, burning shame to use any Christian like this."

These words were hardly out of the turnkey's mouth when a startling cry came suddenly from poor Josephs; a sudden, wild, piercing scream of misery. In that bitter, despairing cry burst out the pent-up anguish of weeks, and the sense of injustice and cruelty more than human. The poor thing gave this one terrible cry. Heaven forbid that you should hear such a one in life, as I hear his in my heart, and then he fell to sobbing as if his whole frame would burst.

They were not much, these rough words of sympathy, but they were the first—the first words, too, of humanity and reason a turnkey had spoken in his favour since he came into this hell. Above all, the first in which it had ever been hinted or implied that his flesh was human flesh. The next moment he began to cry, but that was not so easy. He soon lost his breath and couldn't cry, though his very life depended on it. Tears gave relief. Dame Nature said, "Cry, my suffering son, cry now, and relieve that heart swelling with cruelty and wrong."

But Hawes' infernal machine said, "No, you shall not cry. I give you no room to cry in." The cruel straps jammed him so close, his swelling heart could but half heave. The jagged collar bit his throat so hard he could but give three or four sobs and then the next choked him. The struggle between Nature panting and writhing for relief and the infernal man-press was so bitter strong that the boy choked and blackened and gasped as one in the last agony.

"Undo him," cried Evans hastily, "or we shall kill him amongst us."

"Bucket," said the experienced Fry quite coolly.

The bucket was at hand, its contents were instantly discharged over Josephs' head.

A cry like a dying hare—two or three violent gasps—and he was quiet, all but a strong shiver that passed from

head to foot: only with the water that now trickled from his hair down his face, scalding tears from his young eyes fell to the ground, undistinguished from the water by any eye but God's.

At six o'clock Hawes came into the yard and ordered Fry to take him down. Fry took this opportunity of informing against Evans for his mild interference.

"He will pay for that along with the rest," said Hawes with an oath. Then he turned on Josephs, who halted stiffly by him on his way to his cell.

"I'll make your life hell to you, you young vagabond. You are hardly used, are you? all you have ever known isn't a stroke with a feather to what I'll make you know by and by. Wait till to-morrow comes, you shall see what I can do when I am put to it." Josephs sobbed, but answered nothing, and crawled, sore, stiff, dripping, shivering to his cell. In that miserable hole he would at least be at peace.

He found the gas lighted. He was glad, for he was drenched through and bitterly cold. He crept up to the little gas-light and put his dead white hands over it and got a little warmth into them; he blessed this spark of light and warmth; he looked lovingly down on it, it was his only friend in the jail, his companion in the desolate cell. He wished he could gather it into his bosom; then it would warm his heart, and his blighted flesh, and aching, shivering bones.

While he hung shivering over his spark of light and warmth and comfort, a key was put into his door. "Ah! here's supper," thought he, "and I am so hungry." It was not supper, it was Fry who came in empty-handed, leaving the door open. Fry went to his gas-light and put his finger and thumb on the screw.

"Oh, it burns all right, Mr. Fry," said Josephs; "it won't go any higher, thank you."

"No, it won't," said Fry dryly, and turned it out, leaving the cell in utter darkness.

"There, I told you so," said Josephs pettishly; "now you have been and turned it out."

"Yes, I have been and turned it out," replied Fry, with a brutal laugh, "and it won't be turned on again for fourteen days; so the governor says, however, and I suppose he knows," and Fry went out chuckling.

Josephs burst out sobbing and almost screaming at this

last stroke; it seemed to hurt him more than his fiercer tortures. He sobbed so wildly and so loud that Mr. Jones, passing on the opposite corridor, heard him, and beckoned to Evans to open the cell.

They found the boy standing in the middle of his dungeon, shaking with cold in his drenched clothes, and sobbing with his whole body. It was frightful to see and hear the agony and despair of one so young in years, so old in misery.

Mr. Jones gave him words of common place consolation. Mr. Jones tried to persuade him that patience was the best cure.

"Be patient, and do not irritate the governor any more; the storm will pass."

He seemed to Josephs as one that mocketh. Jones' were such little words to fling in the face of great despair; to chatter unreasonable consolation was to mock his unutterable misery of soul and body.

Mr. Jones was one of those who sprinkle a burning mountain with a teaspoonful of milk and water, and then go away and make sure they have put it out. When he was gone with this impression, Evans took down the boy's bed and said—

"Don't ye cry now like that; it makes me ill to hear any Christian cry like that."

"Oh, Mr. Evans! oh! oh! oh! oh! What have I done? Oh, my mother! my mother! my mother!"

Evans winced. What! had he a mother too? If she could see him now! and perhaps he was her darling, though he was a prisoner. He shook the bed-clothes out, and took hold of the shivering boy, and with kind force made him lie down; then he twisted the clothes tight round him.

"You will get warm, if you will but lie quiet and not think about it."

Josephs did what he was bid. He could not still his sobs, but he turned his mournful eyes on Evans with a look of wonder at meeting with kindness from a human being, and half doubtingly put out his hand. So then Evans, to comfort him, took his hand and shook it several times in his hard palm, and said—

"Good-night. You'll soon get warm; and don't think of it—that is the best way;" and Evans ran away in the middle of a sentence, for the look of astonishment the boy

wore at his humanity went through the man's penitent heart like an arrow.

Josephs lay quiet, and his sobs began gradually to go down, and, as Evans had predicted, some little warmth began to steal over his frame; but he could not comply with all Evans' instructions; he could not help thinking of it. For all that, as soon as he got a little warm, Nature, who knew how much her tortured son needed repose, began to weigh down his eyelids, and he dozed. He often started, he often murmured a prayer for pity as his mind acted over again the scenes of his miserable existence; but still he dozed, and sleep was stealing over him. Sleep! life's nurse sent from Heaven to create us anew day by day! —sleep! that has blunted and gradually cured a hundred thousand sorrows for one that has yielded to any moral remedy—sleep! that has blunted and so cured by degrees a million fleshly ills for one that drugs or draughts have ever reached—sleep had her arm round this poor child, and was drawing him gently, gently, slowly, slowly, to her bosom, when suddenly his cell seemed to him to be all in a blaze, and a rough hand shook him, and a harsh voice sounded in his ear.

"Come, get up out of that, youngster," it said, and the hand almost jerked him off the floor.

"What is the matter?" inquired Josephs, yawning.

"Matter is, I want your bed."

Josephs rose half stupid, and Hodges rolled up his bed and blanket.

"Are you really going to rob me of my bed?" inquired Josephs slowly and firmly.

"Rob you, you young dog? Here is the governor's order. No bed and gas for fourteen days."

"No bed nor gas for fourteen days? Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Oh, you laugh at that, do you?"

"I laugh at Mr. Hawes thinking to keep me out of bed for fourteen days, a poor worn-out boy like me. You tell Hawes I'll find a bed in spite of him long before fourteen days."

Hodges looked about the cell for this other bed.

"Come," said he, "you mustn't chaff the officers. The governor will serve you out enough without your giving us any of your sauce."

Hodges was going with the bed. Josephs stopped him.

The boy took this last blow quite differently from the gas; no impatience or burst of sorrow now.

"Won't you bid me good-bye, Mr. Hodges?" asked he.

"Why not? Good-night."

"That isn't what I mean. Mr. Evans gave me his hand."

"Did he? what for?"

"And so must you. Oh, you may as well, Mr. Hodges. I never came to you and took away your little bit of light and your little bit of sleep. So you can take my hand, if I can give it you. You will be sorry afterwards if you say no."

"There it is; what the better are you for that, you young fool? I'll tell you what it is, you are turning soft. I don't know what to make of you. I shall come to your cell the first thing in the morning." "Ay, do, Mr. Hodges," said Josephs, "and then you won't be sorry you shook hands at night."

At this moment the boy's supper was thrust through the trap-door; it was not the supper by law appointed, but six ounces of bread and a can of water.

Hodges, now that he had touched the prisoner's hand, felt his first spark of something bordering on sympathy He looked at the grub half ashamed, and made a wry face. Josephs caught his look and answered it.

"It is as much as I shall want," said he very calmly, and he smiled at Hodges as he spoke, a sweet and tender but dogged smile; a smile to live in a man's memory for years.

The door was closed with a loud snap, and Josephs was left to face the long night (it was now seven o'clock) in his wet clothes, which smoked with the warmth his late bed had begun to cherish; but they soon ceased to smoke as the boy froze.

Night advanced. Josephs walked about his little cell, his teeth chattering, then flung himself like a dead log on the floor, and finding Hawes' spirit in the cold, hard stone, rose and crawled shivering to and fro again.

Meantime we were all in our nice soft beds; such as found three blankets too little added a dressing-gown of flannel, or print lined with wadding or fleecy hosiery, and so made shift. In particular, all those who had the care of Josephs took care to lie warm and soft. Hawes, Jones, Hodges, Fry, Justices Shallow and Woodcock, all took

the care of their own carcasses they did not take of Josephs' youthful frame.

"Be cold at night? Not if we know it: why, you can't sleep if you are not thoroughly warm!"

CHAPTER XIX.

MIDNIGHT!

Josephs was crouched shivering under the door of his cell, listening.

"All right now. I think they are all asleep; now is the time."

Hawes, Hodges, Jones, Fry, were snoring without a thought of him they had left to pass the livelong night clothed in a sponge, cradled on a stone.

DORMEZ, MESSIEURS! TOUT EST TRANQUILLE; DORMEZ!

CHAPTER XX.

PAST one o'clock!

The moon was up, but often obscured; clouds drifted swiftly across her face; it was a cold morning—past one o'clock. Josephs was at his window, standing tiptoe on his stool. Thoughts coursed one another across his broken heart as fast as the clouds flew past the moon's face; but whatever their nature, the sting was now out of them. The bitter sense of wrong and cruelty was there, but blunted. Fear was nearly extinct, for hope was dead.

There was no tumult in his mind now; he had gone through all that, and had got a step beyond grief or pain.

Thus ran his thoughts: "I wonder what Hawes was going to do with me to-morrow. Something worse than all I have gone through, he said. That seems hard to believe. But I don't know. Best not give him the chance. He does know how to torture one. Well, he must keep it for some other poor fellow. I hope it won't be Robinson. I'll have a look at out-a-doors first. Ah! there is the moon. I wonder does she see what is done here: and there is the sky; it is a beautiful place.

"Who would stay here under Hawes if they could get

up there? God lives up there! I am almost afraid He won't let a poor wicked boy like me come where He is. And they say this is a sin too: He will be angry with me —but I couldn't help it. I shall tell Him what I went through first, and perhaps He will forgive me. His reverence told me He takes the part of those that are ill-used. It will be a good job for me if 'tis so. Perhaps he will serve Hawes out for this instead of me: I think I should if I was Him. I know He can't be so cruel as Hawes; that is my only chance, and I'm going to take it.

"Some folk live to eighty: I am only fifteen; that is a long odds. I daresay it is five times as long as fifteen. It is hard; but I can't help it. Hawes wouldn't let me live to be a man; he is stronger than I am. Will it be a long job, I wonder. Some say it hurts a good deal; some think not. I shall soon know; but I shall never tell. That doesn't trouble me; it is only throttling when all is done, and ain't I throttled every day of my life. Shouldn't I be throttled to-morrow if I was such a spoon as to see to-morrow. I mustn't waste much more time, or my hands will be crippled with cold, and then I shan't be able to.

"Mr. Evans will be sorry—I can't help it. Bless him for being so good to me; and bless Mr. Eden; I hope he will get better, I do. My handkerchief is old, I hope it won't break; oh no! there is no fear of that. I don't weigh half what I did when I came here.

"My mother will fret; but I can't help it. Oh dear! oh dear! oh dear! I hope someone will tell her what I went through first, and then she will say, 'Better so than for my body to be abused worse than a dog every day of my life.' I can't help it! and I should be dead anyway before the fourteen days were out.

"Now is as good a time as any other; no one is stirring, no. Please forgive me, mother. I couldn't help it. Please forgive me, God Almighty, if you care what a poor boy like me does or is done to. I couldn't help it."

. . . . . .

IL EST DEUX HEURES; TOUT EST TRANQUILLE; DORMEZ, MAITRES, DORMEZ!

CHAPTER XXI.

It was a bright morning. The world awoke. The working Englishman, dead drunk at the public-house overnight, had got rid of two-thirds of his burning poison by help of man's chief nurse, sleep; and now he must work off the rest, grumbling at this, the kind severity of his lot. Warm men, respectable men, amongst whom justices of the peace and other voluptuous disciplinarians, were tempted out of delicious beds by the fragrant berry, the balmy leaf, snowy damask, fire glowing behind polished bars—in short, by multifarious comfort set in a frame of gold. They came down.

"How did you sleep, dear sir?"

"Pretty well," said one with a doubtful air.

"Scarce closed my eyes all night," snarled another.

Another had been awoke by the barking of a dog, and it was full half an hour before he could leave the sense of luxurious ease in unconsciousness again. He made an incident of this, and looked round the table for sympathy, and obtained it, especially from such as were toadies.

Now, all these had slept as much as nature required. No. 1, *ar hyd y nos*—παννυχιον—like a top. No. 2, eight hours out of the nine. The ninth, his sufferings had been moderate; they had been confined to this—a bitter sense of two things: first, that he was lying floating in a sea of comforts; secondly, that the moment he should really need sleep, sleep was at his service.

In —— Jail, governor, turnkeys, chaplain, having had something to do the day before, slept among Class 1, and now turned out of their warm beds as they had turned into them, without a shade of anxiety or even recollection of him whom they had left last evening at eight to pass the livelong night in a sponge upon a stone.

Up rose, refreshed with sleep, that zealous officer, Hawes. He was in the prison at daybreak, and circulated with inspecting eye all through it. Went into the kitchen, saw the gruel making; docked Josephs and three more of half their allowance; then into the corridors, where, on one of the snowy walls, he found a speck; swore; had it instantly removed. Thence into the labour-yard, and prepared a crank for an athletic prisoner by secretly

introducing a weight, and so making the poor crank a story-teller, and the prologue to punishment. Returning to the body of the prison, he called out, "Prisoners on the list for hard labour to be taken to the yard."

He was not answered with the usual alacrity, and looked up to repeat his summons, when he observed a cell open, and two turnkeys standing in earnest conversation at the door. He mounted the stairs in great heat.

"What are you all humbugging there for, and why does not that young rascal turn out to work? I'll physic him, —— him!"

The turnkeys looked in their chief's face with a strange expression of stupid wonder. Hawes caught this—his wrath rose higher.

"What d'ye stand staring at me like stuck pigs for? Come out, No. 15, —— you all! Why don't you bring him out to the crank?"

Hodges answered gloomily from the cell, "Come and bring him yourself, if you can."

At such an address from a turnkey, Hawes, who had now mounted the last stair, gave a snort of surprise and wrath —then darted into the cell, threatening the most horrible vengeance on the bones and body of poor Josephs, threats which he confirmed with a tremendous oath. But to that oath succeeded a sudden, dead, stupid, staring silence: for, running fiercely into the cell with rage in his face, threats and curses on his tongue, he had almost stumbled over a corpse.

It lay in the middle of the cell—stark and cold, but peaceful. Hawes stood over it. If he had not stopped short, his foot would have been upon it. His mouth opened but no sound came. He stood paralysed. A greater than he was in that cell, and he was dumb. He looked up. Hodges and Fry were standing silent, looking down on the body. Fry was grave: Hodges trembled. Part of a handkerchief fluttered from the bar of the window. A knife had severed it. The other fragment lay on the floor near the body where Hodges had dropped it. Hawes took this in at a glance, and comprehended it all. This was not the first or second prisoner that had escaped him by a similar road. For a moment his blood froze in him. He wished to heaven he had not been so severe upon the poor boy.

It was but for a moment. The next he steeled himself

in the tremendous egotism that belongs to and makes the deliberate manslayer.

"The young viper has done this to spite me," said he; and he actually cast a look of petulant anger down.

At this precise point the minds that had borne his company so long began to part from it. Fry looked in his face with an expression bordering on open contempt, and Hodges shoved rudely by him and left the cell.

Hodges leaned over the corridor in silence. One of the inferior turnkeys asked him a question, dictated by curiosity, about the situation in which he had found the body. "Don't speak to me!" was the fierce, wild answer. And he looked with a stupid wild stare over the railings.

So wild and white and stricken was this man's face, that Evans, who was exchanging some words with a gentleman on the basement floor, happening to catch sight of it, interrupted himself and hallooed from below, "What, is there anything the matter, Hodges?" Hodges made no reply. The man seemed to have lost his speech for some time past.

"Let us go and see," said the gentleman; and he ascended the steps somewhat feebly, accompanied by Evans.

"What is it, Hodges?"

"What is it?" answered the man impatiently. "Go in there, and you'll see what it is!"

"I don't like this, sir," said Evans. "Oh, I am fearful there is something unfortunate has happened. You mustn't come in, sir. You stay here, and I'll go in and see." He entered the cell.

Meantime, a short conference had passed between Hawes and Fry.

"This is a bad business, Fry."

"And no mistake."

"Had you any idea of this?"

"No! can't say I had."

"If the parson ever gets well, he will make this a handle to ruin you and me."

"Me, sir? I only obey orders."

"That won't save you. If they get the better of me, you will suffer along with me."

"I shouldn't wonder. I told you you were carrying it too far, but you wouldn't listen to me."

"I was wrong, Fry. I ought to have listened to you, for you are the only one that is faithful to me in the jail."

"I know my duty, sir, and I try to do it."

"What are we to do with him, Fry?"

"Well, I don't think he ought to lie on the floor. I'd let him have his bed now, I think."

"You are right. I'll send for it. Ah! here is Evans. go for No. 15's bed."

Evans, standing at the door, had caught but a glimpse of the object that lay on he floor, but that glimpse was enough. He went out and said to Hodges, "Wasn't it you that took Josephs' bed away last night?" The man cowered under the question. "Well, you are to go and fetch it back, the governor says."

Hodges went away for it without a word. Evans returned to the cell. He came and kneeled down by Josephs and laid his hand upon him. "I feared it! I feared it!" said he. "Why, he has been dead a long time. Ah! your reverence, why did you come in when I told you not? Poor Josephs is no more, sir."

Mr. Eden, who had already saluted Mr. Hawes with grave politeness, though without any affectation of goodwill, came slowly up, and, sinking his voice to a whisper in presence of death, said in pitiful accents, "Poor child! he was always sickly. Six weeks ago I feared we should lose him, but he seemed to get better." He was now kneeling beside him. "Was he long ill, sir?" asked he of Hawes. "Probably he was, for he is much wasted. I can feel all his bones. Hardened as they were, Hawes and Fry looked at one another in some confusion. Presently Mr. Eden started back. "Why, what is this? he is wet. He is wet from head to foot. What is the cause of this? Can you tell me, Mr. Hawes?"

Mr. Hawes did not answer, but Evans did.

"I am afraid it is the bucket, your reverence. They soused him in the yard late last night."

"Did they?" said Mr. Eden, looking the men full in the face. "Then they have the more to repent of this morning. But stay! Why then, he was not under the doctor's hands, Evans?"

"La! bless you, no. He was harder worked and worse fed than any man in the jail."

"At work last night! Then at what hour did he

die? He is stiff and cold. This is a very sudden death. Did anyone see this boy die?"

The men gave no answer, but the last words, "Did anyone see this boy die?" seemed to give Evans a new light.

"No," he cried, "no one saw him die. Look here, sir. See what is dangling from the window—his handkerchief."

"And this mark round his throat, Evans. He has destroyed himself!" And Mr. Eden recoiled from the corpse.

"Oh, you may forgive him, sir," said Evans. "We should all have done the same. No human creature could live the life they led him. Who could live upon bread and water and punishment? It is a sorrowful sight, but it is a happy release for him. Eh! poor lad," said Evans, laying his hand upon the body; "I liked thee well, but I am glad thou art gone. Thou hast escaped away from worse trouble."

"Come, it is no use snivelling, Evans," put in Hawes. "I am as sorry for this job as you are. But who would have thought he was so determined? He gave us no warning."

"Don't you believe that, sir," cried Evans to Mr. Eden. "He gave them plenty of warning.—I heard him with my own ears tell you you were killing him: not a day for the last fortnight he did not tell you so, Mr. Hawes."

"Well, I didn't believe him, you see."

"You mean you didn't care."

"Hold your tongue, Evans! You are disrespectful. How dare you speak to me, you insolent dog? Hold your tongue!"

"No, sir, I won't hold my tongue over this dead body."

"Be silent, Evans," said Mr. Eden. "This is no place for disputes. Evans, my heart is broken. While there is life there is hope; but here, what hope is there? Many in this place live in crime, but this one has died in crime; he of whom I had such good hopes has died in crime—died by his own hand; he has murdered his own soul. My heart is broken! my heart is broken!"

The good man's anguish was terrible.

Evans consoled him. "Don't go on so, sir; pray don't. Josephs is where none of us but you shall ever get to; he is in heaven as sure as we are upon earth. He was the best lad in the place; there wasn't a drop of gall in him; who ever heard a bad word from him?

And he did not kill himself till he found he was to die whether or no; so then he shortened his own death-struggle, and he was right."

"I don't understand you."

"I daresay not, sir; but those two understand me. Oh, it is no use to look black at me now, Mr. Hawes; I shall speak my mind though my head was to be cut off. I have been a coward; I thought too much of my wife and children; but I am a man now. Eh! poor lad, thou shan't be maligned now thou art dead, as well as tormented alive. Sir, he that lies here so pale and calm was not guilty of self-destruction. He was driven to death! Don't speak to me, sir, but look at me and hear the truth, as it will come out the day all of us in this cell are damned, except you—and him!"

The man fell suddenly on his knees, took the dead boy's hand in his left hand, and held his right up, and in this strange attitude, which held all his hearers breathless, he poured out a terrible tale.

His boiling heart, and the touch of him whom now too late he defended like a man, gave him simple but real eloquence, and in a few words, that scalded as they fell, he told as powerfully as I have feebly by what road Josephs had been goaded to death.

He brought the dark tale down to where he left the sufferer rolled up in the one comfort left him on earth, his bed; and then turning suddenly, and leaving Josephs, he said sternly—

"And now, sir, ask the governor where is the bed I wrapped the wet boy up in, *for it isn't here.*"

"You know as much as I do!" was Hawes' sulky reply.

But at this moment Hodges came into the cell with the bed in question in his arms.

"There is his bed," cried he, "and what is the use of it now? If you had left it him last night, it would be better for him and for me too," and he flung the bed on the floor.

"Oh, it was you took it from him, was it?" said Evans.

"Well, I am here to obey orders, Jack Evans; do you do nothing but what you like in this place?"

"Let there be no disputing in presence of death?"

"No, sir."

"One thing only is worth knowing or thinking of now; whether there is hope for this our brother in that world to

which he has passed all unprepared. Hodges, you saw him last alive!"

Hodges groaned. "I saw him last at night and first in the morning."

"I entreat you to remember all that passed at night between you!"

"Then cover up his face—it draws my eyes to it."

Mr. Eden covered the dead face gently with his handkerchief.

"Mr. Hawes met me in the corridor and sent me to take away his bed. I found him dozing, and I took it—I did what I was ordered."

Mr. Eden sighed.

"Tell me what *he* said and did."

"Well, sir, when I showed him the order, 'fourteen days without bed and gas,' he bursts out a-laughing——"

"Good Heavens!"

"And says he, 'I don't say for gas, but you tell Mr. Hawes I shan't be without bed nothing nigh so long as that.'"

Mr. Eden and Evans exchanged a meaning glance; so did Fry and Hawes.

"Then I said, 'No, I shan't tell Mr. Hawes anything to make him punish you any more, because you are punished too much as it is,' says I——"

"I am glad you said that. But tell me what *he* said. Did he complain? did he use angry or bitter words? You make me drag it out of you."

"No, he didn't! He wasn't one of that sort! The next thing was, he asked me to give him my hand. Well, I was surprised like at his asking for my hand, and I doing him such an ill turn. So then he said, 'Mr. Hodges,' says he, 'why not? I never took away your bed from under you, so you can give me your hand, if I can give you mine.'"

"Oh, what a beautiful nature! Ah! these are golden words! I hope, for the credit of human nature, you gave him your hand."

"Why, of course I did, sir. I had no malice; it was ignorance, and owing to being so used to obey the governor."

Here Mr. Hawes, who had remained quiet all this time, now absorbed in his own reflections, now listening sullenly to these strange scenes in which the dead boy seemed for a time to have eclipsed his importance, burst angrily in—

"I have listened patiently to you, Mr. Eden, to see how far you would go; but I see if I wait till you leave off

undermining me with my servants, I may wait a long while."

Mr. Eden turned round impatiently.

"You! who thinks of you, or such as you, in presence of such a question as lies here? I am trying to learn the fate of this immortal soul, and I did not see you, or think of you, or notice you were here."

"That is polite! Well, sir, the governor is somebody in most jails, but it seems he is to be nobody here so long as you are in it, and that won't be long. Come, Fry, we have other duties to attend to." So saying, he and his lieutenant went out of the cell.

Hodges went too, but not with them.

The moment they were gone, "Well, sir," burst out Evans, "don't you see that the real murderer is not that stupid, ignorant owl, Hodges?"

"Hush! Evans; this is no time or place for unkindly thoughts; thank Heaven that you are free from their guilt, and leave me alone with him."

He was left alone with the dead.

Evans looked through the peep-hole of the cell an hour later. He was still on his knees, fearing, hoping, vowing, and above all praying—beside the dead.

CHAPTER XXII.

Mr. Eden, when he reappeared in the prison, was sallow, and his limbs feeble, but his fatal disease was baffled, and a few words are due to explain how this happened. The Malvern doctor came back with Susan within twenty hours of her departure. She ushered him into Mr. Eden's room with blushing joy and pride.

The friends shook hands, Mr. Eden thanked him for coming, and the doctor cut him short by demanding an accurate history of his disorder and the remedies that had been applied. Mr. Eden related the rise and progress of his complaint, and meantime the doctor solved the other query by smelling a battalion of empty phials.

"The old story," said he, with a cheerful grin. "You were weak—therefore they gave you things to weaken you. You could not put so much nourishment as usual into your body—therefore they have been taking strength out.

Lastly, the coats of your stomach were irritated by your disorder—so they have raked it like blazes. This is the mill-round of the old medicine; from irritation to inflammation, from inflammation to mortification and decease of the patient. Now, instead of irritating the irritated spot, suppose we try a little counter-irritation."

"With all my heart."

The doctor then wetted a towel with cold water, wrung it half dry, and applied it to Mr. Eden's stomach.

This experiment he repeated four times with a fresh towel at intervals of twenty minutes. He had his bed made in Mr. Eden's room.

"Tell me if you feel feverish."

Towards morning Mr. Eden tossed and turned, and the doctor, rising, found him dry and hot and feverish. Then he wetted two towels, took the sheets off his own bed, and placed one wet towel on a blanket; then he made his patient strip naked, and lie down on this towel, which reached from the nape of his neck to his loins.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Eden, "horrible!"

Then he put the other towel over him in front.

"Ugh! that is worse; you are a bold man with your remedies. I shiver to the bone."

"You won't shiver long."

He laid hold of one edge of the blanket, and pulled it over him with a strong, quick pull, and tucked it under him. The same with the other side: and now Mr. Eden was in a blanket-prison—a regular strait-waistcoat, his arms pinned to his sides. Two more blankets were placed loosely over him.

"Mighty fine, doctor; but suppose a fly or a gnat should settle on my face?"

"Call me, and I'll take him off."

In about three-quarters of an hour Dr. Gulson came to his bedside again.

"How are you now?"

"In Elysium."

"Are you shivering?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Are you hot?"

"Nothing of the sort. I am Elysian. Please retreat. Let no mere mortals approach. Come not near our fairy king," murmured the sick man. "I am Oberon, slumbering on tepid roses in the garden whence I take my name," purred our divine, mixing a creed or two.

"Well, you must come out of this paradise for the present."

"You wouldn't be such a monster as to propose it."

Spite of his remonstrances, he was unpacked, rubbed dry, and returned to his own bed, where he slept placidly till nine o'clock. The next day fresh applications of wet cloths to the stomach, and in the evening one of the doctor's myrmidons arrived from Malvern. The doctor gave him full and particular instructions.

The next morning Mr. Eden was packed again. He delighted in the operation, but remonstrated against the term.

"Packed!" said he to them, "is that the way to speak of a paradisiacal process under which fever and sorrow fly, and calm complacency steals over mind and body?"

A slight diminution of all the unfavourable symptoms, and a great increase of appetite, relieved the doctor's anxiety so far that he left him under White's charge. So was the myrmidon called.

"Do not alter your diet—it is simple and mucilaginous—but increase the quantity by degrees."

He postponed his departure till midnight.

Up to the present time he had made rather light of the case, and as for danger, he had pooh-poohed it with good-humoured contempt. Just before he went he said—

"Well, Frank, I don't mind telling you now that I am very glad you sent for me, and I'll tell you why. Forty-eight hours more of irritating medicines, and no human skill could have saved your life."

"Ah! my dear friend, you are my good angel. You can have no conception how valuable my life is."

"Oh yes, I can!"

"And you have saved that life. Yes, I am weak still, but I feel I shall live. You have cured me."

"In popular language, I have; but between ourselves, nobody ever cures anybody. Nature cures all that are cured. But I patted Nature on the back; the others hit her over the head with bludgeons and brickbats."

"And now you are going? I must not keep you, or I shall compromise other lives. Well, go and fulfil your mission. But first think—is there anything I can do in part return for such a thing as this, old friend?"

"Only one that I can think of. Outlive me, old friend."

A warm and tender grasp of the hand on this, and the Malvern doctor jumped into a fly, and the railway soon whirled him into Worcestershire.

His myrmidon remained behind, and carried out his chief's orders with inflexible severity, unsoftened by blandishments unshaken by threats.

In concert with Susan, he closed the door upon all harassing communications.

One day Evans came to tell the invalid how the prisoners were maltreated. Susan received him, wormed from him his errand, and told him Mr. Eden was too ill to see him, which was what my French brethren call *une sainte mensonge*—I, a fib.

A slow but steady cure was effected by these means: applications of water in various ways to the skin, simple diet, and quiet. A great appetite soon came; he ate twice as much as he had before the new treatment, and would have eaten twice as much as he did, but the myrmidon would not let him. Whenever he was feverish, the myrmidon packed him, and in half an hour the fever was gone. His cheeks began to fill, his eyes to clear and brighten, only his limbs could not immediately recover their strength.

As he recovered, his anxiety to be back among his prisoners increased daily, but neither Susan nor the myrmidon would hear of it. They acted in concert, and stuck at nothing to cure their patient. They assured him all was going on well in the prison. They meant well; but for all that, every lie, great or small, is the brink of a precipice the depth of which nothing but Omniscience can fathom.

He believed them, yet he was uneasy; and this uneasiness increased with his returning strength. At last one morning, happening to awake earlier than usual, he stole a march on his nurses, and, taking his stick, walked out, and tottered into the jail.

He found Josephs dead under the fangs of Hawes, and the whole prison groaning.

Now the very day his symptoms became more favourable, it so happened that he had received a few lines from the Home Office, that had perhaps aided his recovery by the hopes they inspired.

"The matter of your last communication is forwarded to the 'Inspector of Prisons.' He is instructed to inquire strictly into your statements and report to this Office."

The short note concluded with an intimation that the

tone in which Mr. Eden had conveyed his remonstrances was intemperate, out of place, and WITHOUT PRECEDENT.

Mr. Eden was rejoiced.

The "Inspector of Prisons" was a salaried officer of the Crown, enlightened by a large comparison of many prisons, and, residing at a distance, was not open to the corrupting influences of association and personal sympathy with the governor, as were the county magistrates.

Day after day Mr. Eden rose in hope that day would not pass without the promised visit from the "Inspector of Prisons." Day after day no inspector. At last Mr. Eden wrote to him to inquire when he was coming.

The letter travelled about after him, and, after a considerable delay, came his answer. It was to this effect: That he was instructed to examine into charges made against the governor of —— Jail; but that he had no instructions to make an irregular visit for that purpose. His progress would bring him this year to —— Jail in six weeks' time, when he should act on his instructions, but these did not justify him in varying from the routine of his circuit.

Six weeks is not long to wait for help in a matter of life and death, thought the eighty-pounders, the clerks who execute England.

Three days of this six weeks had scarce elapsed, when two prisoners were driven a step each further than their wretched fellow-sufferers who were to follow them in a week or two. Of these, one, "a mild, quiet, docile boy," was driven to self-slaughter; and another, one of the best-natured rogues in the place, was driven to manslaughter.

This latter incident Mr. Eden prevented. I will presently relate how; it was not by postponing his interference for six weeks.

When Mr. Eden rose from his knees beside the slaughtered boy, he went home at once and wrote to the Home Secretary. On the envelope he wrote "private," and inside to this effect:—

"Two months ago I informed you officially that prisoners are daily assaulted, starved, and maltreated to the danger of their lives by the governor of —— Jail. I demanded of you an inquiry on the spot. In reply you evaded my demand, and proposed to refer me to the visiting justices.

"In answer, I declined these men for referees on two grounds, viz., that I had lodged an appeal with a higher

jurisdiction than theirs, and that they were confederates of the criminal; and, to enforce the latter objection, I included your proposed referees in my charges, and once more demanded of you in the Queen's name an examination of her unworthy servants on the instant and on the spot.

"On this occasion I warned you in these words:—

"'Here are one hundred and eighty souls, to whose correction, care, and protection the State is pledged. No one of these lives is safe a single day; and for every head that falls from this hour I hold you responsible to God and the State.'

"Surely these were no light words, yet they fell light on you.

"In answer, you promised us the 'Inspector of Prisons,' but you gave him no instructions to come to us. You fooled away time, when time was human life. Read once more my words of warning, and then read these:—

"This morning a boy of fifteen was done to death by Mr. Hawes. Of his death you are not guiltless. You were implored to prevent it, you could have prevented it, and you did not prevent it. The victim of jail cruelty and of the maladministration in Government offices lies dead in his cell.

"In three days I shall commit his body to the dust, but his memory never—until he is avenged, and those who are in process of being murdered like him receive the protection of the State.

"If in the three days between this boy's murder and his burial your direct representative and agent does not come here and examine this jail and sift the acts of those who govern it, on the fourth day I lay the whole case before Her Majesty the Queen and the British nation by publishing it in all the journals. Then I shall tell Her Majesty that, having thrice appealed in vain to her representatives, I am driven to appeal to herself; with this I shall print the evidence I have thrice offered you of this jailor's felonies and their sanguinary results. That Lady has a character; one of its strong, unmistakable features is a real, tender, active humanity.

"I read characters—it is a part of my business; and believe me, this Lady, once informed of the crimes done in her name, will repudiate and abhor alike her hirelings' cruelty and her clerks' and secretaries' indifference to suffering and slaughter. Nor will the public hear unmoved

the awful tale. Shame will be showered on all connected with these black deeds, even on those who can but be charged with conniving at them.

"To be exposed to national horror on the same column with the greatest felon in England would be a cruel position, a severe punishment for a man of honour, whose only fault perhaps is that he has mistaken an itch for eminence for a capacity for business, and so serves the State without comprehending it. But what else can I do? I, too, serve the State, and I comprehend what I owe it, and the dignity with which it intrusts me, and the deep responsibility it lays on me. I therefore cannot assent to future felonies any more than I have to past and present, but must stop them, and will stop them—how I can.

"So, sir, I offer you the post of honour or a place of shame. Choose! for three whole days you have the choice. Choose! and may God enlighten you and forgive me for waiting these three days.—I have the honour to be, etc., etc."

To this letter, whose tone was more eccentric, more flesh and blood, and WITHOUT PRECEDENT than the last, came an answer in a different hand from the others.

"—— acknowledged receipt of the chaplain's letter.

"Since a human life has succumbed under the discipline of —— Jail, an inquiry follows immediately as a matter of course. The other inducements you have held out are comparatively weak, and something more than superfluous. How far they are in good taste will be left to your own cooler consideration. A person connected with the Home Department will visit your jail, with large powers, soon after you receive this.

"He is instructed to avail himself of your zeal and knowledge.

"Be pleased to follow this course. Select for him the plainer facts of your case. If on the face of the business he sees ground for deeper inquiry, a commission will sit upon the jail, and meanwhile all suspected officers will be suspended. You will consider yourself still in direct correspondence with this Office, but it is requested, on account of the mass of matter daily submitted to us, that your communications may be confined to facts, and those stated as concisely as possible."

On reading this, Mr. Eden coloured with shame as well as pleasure. "How gentleman-like all this is!" thought he. "How calm and superior to me, who, since I had the jaundice, am always lowering my office by getting into a heat! And I to threaten this noble, dignified creature with the *Times!* I am thoroughly ashamed of myself. Yet what could I do? I had tried everything short of bullying, and failed. But I now suspect —— never saw my two first letters. Doubtless the rotten system of our public offices is more to blame than this noble fellow."

Thus accusing himself, Mr. Eden returned with somewhat feeble steps to the jail. One of the first prisoners he visited was Thomas Robinson. He found that prisoner in the attitude of which he thought he had cured him, coiled up like a snake, moody and wretched. The man turned round with a very bad expression on his face, which soon gave way to a look of joy. He uttered a loud exclamation, and springing unguardedly up, dropped a brickbat, which rolled towards Mr. Eden and nearly hit him. Robinson looked confused, and his eyes rose and fell from Mr. Eden's face to the brickbat.

"How do you do?"

"Not so well as before you fell ill, sir. It has been hard times with us poor fellows since we lost you."

"I fear it has."

"You have just come back in time to save a life or two. There is a boy called Josephs. I hope the day won't go over without your visiting him, for they are killing him by inches."

"How do you know that?"

"I heard him say so."

Mr. Eden groaned.

"You look pale, my poor fellow."

"I shall be better now," replied the thief, looking at him affectionately.

"What is this?"

"This, sir!—what, sir?"

"This brick?"

"Well, why, it is a brick, sir!"

"Where did you get it?"

"I found it in the yard."

"What were you going to do with it?"

"Oh, I wasn't going to do any ill with it."

"Then why that guilty look when you dropped it?

Come, now, I am in no humour to be hard upon you. Were you going to make some more cards?"

"Now, sir, didn't I promise you I never would do that again?" and Robinson wore an aggrieved look. "Would I break a promise I made to you?"

"What was it for, then?"

"Am I bound to criminate myself, your reverence?"

"Certainly not to your enemy; but to your friend, and to him who has the care of your soul—yes!"

"Let me ask you a question first, sir. Which is worth most, one life or twenty?"

"Twenty."

"Then if by taking one life you can save twenty, it is a good action to put that one out of the way?"

"That does not follow."

"Oh, doesn't it? I thought it did. There's a man in this prison that murders men wholesale. I thought if I could in any way put it out of his power to kill any more, what a good action it would be!"

"A good action! so then this brick——"

"Was for Hawes' skull, your reverence."

"This, then, is the fruit of all my teaching. You will break my heart amongst you."

"Don't say so, sir! pray don't say so! I won't touch a hair of his head now you are alive; but I thought you were dead or dying, so what did it matter then what I did? Besides, I was driven into a corner; I could only kill that scoundrel or let him kill me. But you are alive, and you will find some way of saving my life as well as his."

"I will try. But first abandon all thoughts of lawless revenge. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' Come, promise me."

"Now, sir, is it likely I would offend you for the pleasure of dirtying my fingers with that rascal's blood? Don't let such a lump of dirt as him make mischief between you and me, sir."

"I understand! With you any unchristian sentiment is easily driven out by another. Hatred is to give way to contempt."

"No, sir, but you are alive, and I don't think of Hawes now one way or other; with such scum as that, out of sight is out of mind. When did you begin to get better, sir? and are you better? and shall I see your blessed face in my cell every day as I used?" And the water stood in the thief's eyes.

Mr. Eden smiled and sighed. "Your mind is like an eel. Heaven help the man that tries to get hold of it to do it any lasting good! You and I must have a good pray together some day."

"Ah! your reverence, that would do me good, soul and body," said Mr. Supple.

"Let me now feel your pulse. It is very low. What is the matter?"

"Starvation, overwork, and solitude; I feel myself sinking."

"If I could amuse your mind?"

"Even you could hardly do that, sir."

"Hum! I have brought you a quire of paper, and one of Mr. Gillott's swan-quill pens, and a penny ink-bottle."

"What for?"

"You are to write a story."

"But I never wrote one in my life."

"Then this will be the first."

"Oh, I'll try, sir. I've tried a hundred things in my life, and they none of them proved so hard as they looked. What kind of story?"

"The only kind of story that is worth a button—a true story—the story of Thomas Robinson, *alias* Scott, *alias* Lyon, *alias* etc."

"Then you should have brought a ream instead of a quire."

"No; I want to read it when it is written. Now write the truth; do not dress or cook your facts; I shall devour them raw with twice the relish, and they will do you ten times the good. And intersperse no humbug, no sham penitence. When your own life lies thus spread out before you like a map, you will find you regret many things you have done, and view others with calmer and wiser eyes; for self-review is a healthy process. Write down these honest reflections, but don't overdo it—don't write a word you don't feel. It will amuse you while you are at it."

"That it will."

"It will interest me more than the romance of a carpet writer who never saw life, and it may do good to other prisoners."

"I want to begin."

"I know you do, creature of impulse! Let me feel your pulse again. Ah! it has gained about ten."

"Ten! your reverence. Fifty, you mean. It is you for putting life into a poor fellow and keeping him from despair. It is not the first time you have saved me. The devil hates you more than all the other parsons, for you are as ingenious in good as he is in mischief."

In the midst of this original eulogy Mr. Eden left the cell suddenly with an aching heart, for the man's words reminded him that, for all his skill and zeal, a boy of fifteen years lay dead of despair hard by. He went, but he left two good things behind him—occupation and hope.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The inexperienced in jails would take for granted that the death of Josephs gave Mr. Hawes' system a fatal check. No such thing. He was staggered. So was Pharaoh staggered several times, yet he always recovered himself in twenty-four hours. Hawes did not take so long as that. A suicide was no novelty under his system. Six hours after he found his victim dead, he had a man and a boy crucified in the yard, swore horribly at Fry, who for the first time in his life was behind time, and tore out of his hands "Uncle Tom," which was the topic that had absorbed Fry and made him two minutes behind him; went home and wrote a note to his friend Williams, informing him of the suicide that had taken place, and reflecting severely upon Josephs for his whole conduct, with which this last offence against discipline was in strict accordance. Then he had his grog, and having nothing to do, he thought he would see what was that story which had prevailed so far over the stern realities of system as to derange that piece of clockwork that went by the name of Fry. He yawned over the first pages, but as the master-hand unrolled the great chromatic theory, he became absorbed, and devoured this great human story till his candles burned down in their sockets, and sent him to bed four hours later than usual.

The next morning, soon after chapel, a gentleman's servant rode up to the jail and delivered a letter for Mr. Hawes. It was from Justice Williams. That worthy expressed in polysyllables his sorrow at the death of Josephs after this fashion:—

"A circumstance of this kind is always to be deplored,

since it gives occasion to the enemies of the system to cast reflections, which, however unphilosophical and malignant, prejudice superficial judgments against our salutary discipline."

He then went on to say that the visiting justices would be at the jail the next day at one o'clock to make their usual report, in which Mr. Hawes might be sure his zeal and fidelity would not pass unnoticed. He concluded by saying that Mr. Hawes must on that occasion present his charges against the chaplain in a definite form, and proceedings would be taken on the spot.

"Aha! aha! So I shall get rid of him. Confound him! he makes me harder upon the beggars than I should be. Fry, put these numbers on the cranks and bring me your report after dinner."

With these words Mr. Hawes vanished, and, to the infinite surprise of the turnkeys, was not seen in the jail for many hours. At two o'clock, as he was still not in the prison, Fry went to his house. He found Mr. Hawes deep in a book.

"Brought the report, sir."

"Give it to me. Humph! Nos. 40 and 45 refractory at the crank. No. 65 caught getting up to his window; says he wanted to feel the light. 65—that is one of the boys, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"How old is the young varmint?"

"Eleven, sir."

"No. 14 heard to speak to a prisoner that was leaving the jail, his term being out. What did he say to him?"

"Said 'Good-bye! God bless you!'"

"I'll shut his mouth. Confound the beggars! how fond they are of talking. I think they would rather go without their food than without their jaw."

"No. 19 caught writing a story. It is that fellow Robinson, one of the parson's men. I'll write something on his skin. How did he get the things to write with?"

"Chaplain gave them him."

"Ah! I am glad of that. You brought them away, of course?"

"Yes, sir, here they are. He made a terrible fuss about parting with them."

"What did he say?"

"He said Heaven was to judge between me and him."

"Blaspheming dog! —— him! I'll break him. What else?"

"'Get out of my sight,' said he, 'for fear I do you a mischief.' So then down he pops on his knees in a corner and turns his back on me, like an ignorant brute that he is."

"Never mind, Fry, I'll break him."

"I suppose we shall see you in the prison soon, shan't we, sir? The place looks strange to me without you."

"By and by—by and by. This confounded book sticks to me like a leech. How far had you got when you lent it me?"

"Got just to the most interesting part," said Fry dolefully, "where he comes under a chap called Legree; and then you took it away."

"Well, you'll have it again as soon as I have done with it. I say, what do you think of this book? Is it true, do you think?"

"Oh, it is true—I'd take my oath of that."

"Why, how do you know?"

"Because it reads like true."

"That is no rule, ye fool."

"Well, sir, what do you think?"

This question staggered Hawes for a moment. However, he assumed an oracular look, and replied, "I think some of it is true and some isn't."

"Do you think it is true about their knocking down blackee in one lot, and his wife in another, and sending 'em a thousand miles apart?"

"Oh, that is true enough, I daresay."

"And running them down with blood-hounds?"

"Why not? They look upon the poor devils as beasts. If you tell a Yankee a nigger is a man, he thinks you are poking fun at him."

"It is a cursed shame!"

"Of course it is; but I'll tell you what I can't swallow in his book. Hem! did you ever fall in with any Yankees?"

"One or two, sir."

"Were they green at all?"

"That they weren't. They were rather foxy, I should say."

"Rather! why, one of them would weather upon any three Englishmen that ever were born. Now here is a book that as good as tells me it is a Yankee custom to

disable their beasts of burden. Gammon! they can't afford to do it. I believe," continued this candid personage (who had never been in any of the States), "they are the cruellest set on the face of the earth, but then they are the 'cutest (that is their own word), and they are a precious sight too 'cute to disable the beast that carries the grist to the mill."

"Doesn't seem likely—now you put it to me."

"Have a glass of grog, Fry."

"Thank you, sir."

"And there is the paper. Run your eye over it and don't speak to me for ten minutes, for I must see how Tom gets on under this bloody-minded heathen."

Fry read the paper; but although he moistened it with a glass of grog, he could not help casting envious glances from his folio at Mr. Hawes' duodecimo.

Fibs mixed with truth charm us more than truth mixed with fibs.

Presently an oath escaped from Mr. Hawes.

"Sir!"

"Nothing, it is only this infernal—humph!"

Presently another expletive. "I'll tell you what it is, Fry, if somebody doesn't knock this thundering Legree on the head, I'll put the book on the fire."

"Well, but if it isn't true, sir?"

"But it is true, every word of it, while you are reading it, ye fool. What heathens there are in the world! First they sell a child out of his mother's arms. She cuts sooner than be parted. They hunt her and come up with her; but she knows what they are, and trusts her life and the child to one of their great thundering frozen rivers, as broad as the British Channel, sooner than fall into their hands. That is like a woman, Fry. A fig for me being drowned if the kid is drowned with me; and I don't even care so much for the kid being drowned if I go down with him—and the cowardly vermin, dogs and men, stood barking on the bank and dursn't follow a woman; but your cruel ones are always cowards. And now the rips have got hold of this Tom. A chap with no great harm in him that I see, except that he is a —— sniveller and psalm-singer, and makes you sick at times, but he isn't lazy; and now they are mauling him because he couldn't do the work of two. A man can but do his best, black or white, and it is infernal stupidity as well as cruelty to torment a fellow because he can't do more than he can do. And all

this because over the same flesh and blood there is the sixteenth of an inch of skin a different colour. Wonder whether a white bear takes a black one for a hog, or a red fox takes a blue one for a badger? Well, Fry, thank your stars that you were born in Britain. There are no slaves here, and no buying and selling of human flesh; and one law for high and low, rich and poor, and justice for the weak as well as the strong."

"Yes, sir," said Fry deferentially. "Are you coming into the jail, sir?"

"No," replied Hawes sturdily. "I won't move till I see what becomes of the negro, and what is done to this eternal ruffian."

"But about the prisoners in my report, sir?" remonstrated Fry.

"Oh, you can see to that without my coming," replied Hawes with nonchalance. "Put 40 and 45 in the jacket four hours apiece. Mind there's somebody by with the bucket against they sham."

"Yes, sir."

"Put the boy on bread and water, and to-morrow I'll ask the justices to let me flog him. No. 14—humph! stop his supper—and his bed—and gas."

"And Robinson?"

"Oh, give him no supper at all, and no breakfast, not even bread and water—d'ye hear? And at noon I'll put him with his empty belly in the black-hole—that will cow him down to the ground. There, be off!"

Next morning Mr. Hawes sat down to breakfast in high spirits. This very day he was sure to humiliate his adversary, most likely get rid of him altogether.

Mr. Eden, on the contrary, wore a sombre air. Hawes noticed it, mistook it, and pointed it out to Fry. "He is down upon his luck: he knows he is coming to an end."

After breakfast Mr. Eden went into Robinson's cell: he found him haggard.

"Oh, I am glad you are come, sir; they are starving me! No supper last night, no breakfast this morning, and all for—hum!"

"For what?"

"Well, sir, then—having paper in my cell, and for writing—doing what you bade me—writing my life."

Mr. Eden coloured and winced. The cruelty and the personal insult combined almost took away his breath for

a moment. "Heaven grant me patience a little longer," said he aloud. Then he ran out of the cell, and returned in less than a minute with a great hunch of bread and a slice of ham. "Eat this," said he, all fluttering with pity.

The famished man ate like a wolf; but in the middle he did stop to say, "Did one man ever save another so often as you have me? Now my belly is full, I shall have strength to stand the jacket, or whatever is to come next."

"But you are not to be tormented further than this, I hope."

"Ah! sir," replied Robinson, "you don't know the scoundrel yet. He is not starving me for nothing. This is to weaken me till he puts the weight on that is to crush me."

"I hope you exaggerate his personal dislike to you and your own importance—we all do that."

"Well," sighed Robinson, "I hope I do. Anyway, now my belly is full, I have got a chance with him."

The visiting justices met in the jail. The first to arrive was Mr. Woodcock; in fact, he came at eleven o'clock, an hour before the others. Had Mr. Hawes expected him so soon, he would have taken Carter down, who was the pilloried one this morning; but he was equal to the emergency. He met Mr. Woodcock with a depressed manner, as of a tender but wise father, who in punishing his offspring had punished himself, and said in a low, regretful voice, "I am sorry to say I have been compelled to punish a prisoner very severely."

"What is his offence?"

"Being refractory and breaking his crank. You will find him in the labour-yard. He was so violent, we were obliged to put him in the jacket."

"I shall see him. The labour-yard is the first place I go to."

Mr. Hawes knew that, Mr. Woodcock.

The justice found Carter in that state of pitiable torture the sight of which made Mr. Eden very ill. He went up to him and said, "My poor fellow, I am very sorry for you; but discipline must be maintained, and you are now suffering for fighting against it. Make your submission to the governor, and then I daresay he will shorten your punishment as far as he thinks consistent with his duty."

Carter, it may well be imagined, made no answer. It is doubtful whether the worthy magistrate expected or

required one. An occasion for misjudging a self-evident case of cruelty had arrived. This worthy seized the opportunity, received an *ex-parte* statement for gospel, and misjudged, spite of his senses.

Item, an occasion for twaddling had come, and this good soul seized it and twaddled into a man's ear who was fainting on the rack.

At this moment the more observant Hawes saw the signs of "shamming" coming on. So he said hastily, "Oh, he will come to soon, and then he will be taken down;" and moved away. Mr. Woodcock followed him without one grain of suspicion or misgiving.

The English State has had many opportunities of gauging the average intellects of its unpaid jurists. By these it has profited so well that it intrusts blindly to this gentleman and his brethren the following commission:—

They are to come into a place of darkness and mystery, a place locked up, a place which, by the folly of the nation and the shallow egotists who are its placemen and are called its statesmen, is not subject to the only safeguard of law and morals, daily inspection by the great unprejudiced public. They are to come into this, the one pitch-dark hole that is now left in the land. They are to come here once in two months, and at this visit to see all that has been done there in the dark since their last visit. Their eagle-eye is not to be hoodwinked by appearances got up to meet their visit. They are to come and comprehend with one piercing glance the past months as well as the present hour. Good! Only for this task is required, not the gullibility that characterises the many, but the sagacity that distinguishes the few.

Mr. Woodcock undertook not to be deceived as to what had been done in the jail while he was forty miles distant, and Hawes gulled him under his own eyes.

What different men there are in the world, and how differently are the same things seen by them! The first crucifixion Eden saw, he turned as sick as a dog; the first crucifixion Woodcock saw, he twaddled in the crucified's ear, left him on the cross, and went on his way well pleased.

Hawes, finding what sort of man he had to deal with, thought within himself, "Why should I compromise discipline in any point?" He said to Mr. Woodcock, "There is another prisoner whom I am afraid I must give an hour in the dark cell."

"What has he been doing?"

"Scribbling a lot of lies upon some paper he got from the chaplain."

Mr. Hawes' brief and unkind definition of autobiography did Robinson's business. Mr. Woodcock simply observed that the proposed punishment was by no means a severe one for the offence.

They visited several cells. Woodcock addressed the prisoners in certain words, accompanied with certain tones and looks, that were at least as significant as his words, and struck the prisoners as more sincere.

The words, "If you have anything to complain of here, now is the time to say so, and your complaint shall be sifted."

The tones and looks, "I know you are better off here than such scum as you deserve, but you have a right to contradict me if you like; only mind, if you don't prove it to my satisfaction, who am not the man to believe anything you say, you had better have held your tongue."

Meantime Mr. Hawes said nothing, but fixed his eye on the rogue, and that eye said, "One word of discontent, and the moment he has gone I massacre you." Then followed in every case the old theatrical business according to each rogue's measure of ability. They were in the Elysian fields; one thing alone saddened them—some day or other they must return to the world.

Fathers, sent by your apprehensive wives to see whether Dicky is well used at that school or not, don't draw Dicky into a corner of the playground, and with tender kisses and promises of inviolable secrecy coax him to open his little heart to you, and tell you whether he is really happy; leave such folly to women—it is a weakness to wriggle into the truth as they do.

No! you go like a man into the parlour with the schoolmaster—then have Dicky in—let him see the two authorities together on good terms—then ask him whether he is happy and comfortable and well used. He will tell you he is. Go home rejoicing; but before you go into the drawing-room, do pray spend twenty minutes by the kitchen-fire, and then go upstairs to the boy's mother—and let her eat you, for you belong to the family of the Woodcocks.

"We are passing one cell."

"Oh, that one is empty," replied Hawes.

Not quite empty; there was a beech coffin standing in

that cell, and the corpse of a murdered thief lay waiting for it.

At twelve o'clock the justices were all assembled in their room. "We will send you a message in half an hour, Mr. Hawes."

Mr. Hawes bowed and retired, and bade Fry to take Robinson to the dark cell. The poor fellow knew resistance was useless. He came out at the word of command, despair written on his face. Of all the horrors of this hell, the dark cell was the one he most dreaded. He looked up to Hawes to see if anything he could say would soften him. No; that hardened face showed neither pity nor intelligence; as well appeal to a stone statue of a mule.

At this moment Mr. Eden came into the jail. Robinson met him on the ground-floor, and cried out to him, "Sir, they are sending me to the black-hole for it. I am a doomed man; the black-hole for six hours."

"No," roared Hawes from above, "for twelve hours; the odd six is for speaking in prison."

Robinson groaned.

"I will take you out in three," said Mr. Eden calmly.

Hawes heard and laughed aloud.

"Give me your hand on that, sir, for pity's sake," cried Robinson.

Mr. Eden gave him his hand and said firmly, "I will take you out in two hours, please God."

Hawes chuckled. "Parson is putting his foot in it more and more. The justices shall know this."

This momentary contact with his good angel gave Robinson one little ray of hope for a companion in the cave of darkness, madness, and death.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The justices went through their business in the usual routine. They had Mr. Hawes book up—examined the entries—received them with implicit confidence—looked for no other source of information to compare them with. Examined one witness and did not cross-examine him.

This done, one of them proposed to concoct their report at once. Another suggested that the materials were not complete; that there was a charge against the chaplain.

This should be looked into, and should it prove grave, embodied in their report.

Mr. Williams overruled this. "We can reprimand, or if need be the bench can dismiss, a chaplain without troubling the Secretaries of State. Let us make our report and then look into the chaplain's conduct, who is after all a newcomer, and they say a little cracked; he is a man of learning."

So hey wrote their report, and in it expressed their conviction that the system on the whole worked admirably. They noticed the incident of Josephs' suicide, but attached no significance and little importance to it. Out of a hundred and eighty prisoners there would be a few succumb in one way or another under the system, but on the whole the system worked well.

Jugger system's wheels were well greased, and so long as they were well greased it did not matter their crushing one or two. Besides the crushed were only prisoners, the refuse of society. They reported the governor, Mr. Hawes, as a painstaking, active, zealous officer; and now Mr. Hawes was called in—the report was read to him—and he bowed, laid his hand upon his aorta, and presented a histrionic picture of modest merit surprised by unexpected praise from a high quarter. Next, Mr. Hawes was requested to see the report sent off to the post.

"I will, gentlemen;" and in five minutes he was at the post-office in person, and his praises on the way to his Sovereign or her representative.

"How long will the parson take us?"

"Oh, not ten minutes."

"I hope not, for I want to look at a horse."

"We had better send for him at once then."

The bell was rung and the chaplain sent for. The chaplain was praying the prayers for the sick by the side of a dying prisoner. He sent back word how he was employed, and that he would come as soon as he had done.

This message was not well received. Keep a living justice waiting for a dying dog!

"These puppies want taking down," said Mr. Woodcock.

"Oh, leave him to me," replied Mr. Williams.

Soon after this the following puppy came into the room. A gentleman of commanding figure, erect but easy, with a head of remarkable symmetry and an eye like a stag's. He entered the room quietly but rather quickly, and with

an air of business; bowed rapidly to the three gentlemen in turn, and waited in silence their commands.

Then Mr. Williams drew himself up in his chair, and wore the solemn and dignified appearance that becomes a judge trying a prisoner, with this difference, that his manner was not harsh or intentionally offensive, but just such as to reveal his vast superiority and irresistible weight.

In a solemn tone, with a touch of pity, he began thus—

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Eden, that grave charges are laid against you in the prison."

"Give yourself no uneasiness on my account, sir," replied Mr. Eden politely; "they are perhaps false."

"Yet they come from one who has means of knowing—from the governor, Mr. Hawes."

"Ah! then they are sure to be false."

"We shall see. Four Sundays ago you preached a sermon?"

"Two."

"Ay! but one was against cruelty?"

"It was; the other handled theft."

"Mr. Hawes conceives himself to have been singled out and exposed by that sermon."

"Why so? there are more than thirty cruel men in this jail besides him."

"Then this sermon was not aimed at him?" put Mr. Williams with a pinning air.

"It was and it was not. It was aimed at that class of my parishioners to which he belongs; a large class, including all the turnkeys but one, between twenty and thirty of the greater criminals among the prisoners—and Mr. Hawes."

Mr. Williams bit his lip. "Gentlemen, this classification shows the animus;" then turning to Mr. Eden, he said with a half-incredulous sneer, "How comes it that Mr. Hawes took this sermon all to himself?"

Mr. Eden smiled. "How does it happen that two prisoners, 82 and 87, took it all to themselves? These two men sent for me after the sermon; they were wife-beaters. I found them both in great agitation; one terrified, the other softened to tears of penitence. These did not apply my words to Mr. Hawes. The truth is, when a searching sermon is preached, each sinner takes it to himself. I am glad Mr. Hawes fitted the cap on. I am glad the prisoners fitted the cap on. I am sorry Mr. Hawes

was irritated instead of reformed. I am glad those two less hardened sinners were reformed instead of irritated."

"And I must tell you, sir, that we disapprove of your style of preaching altogether, and we shall do more, we shall make a change in this respect the condition of your remaining in office."

"And the bishop of the diocese?" asked Mr. Eden.

"What about him?"

"Do you think he will allow you, an ignorant, inexperienced layman, to usurp the episcopal function in his diocese?"

"The episcopal function, Mr. Eden?"

Mr. Eden smiled. "He does not even see that he has been trying to usurp sacred functions and of the highest order. But it is all of a piece—a profound ignorance of all law, civil or ecclesiastical, characterises all your acts in this jail. My good soul, just ask yourself for what purpose does a bishop exist? Why is one priest raised above other priests, and consecrated bishop, but to enable the Church to govern its servants. I laugh, but I ought rather to rebuke you. What you have attempted is something worse than childish arrogance. Be warned! and touch not the sacred vessels so rashly—it is profanation."

The flashing eye and the deepening voice, and the old awful ecclesiastical superiority suddenly thundering upon them, quite cowed the two smaller magistrates. Williams, whose pomposity the priest had so rudely shaken, gasped for breath with rage. Magisterial arrogance was not prepared for ecclesiastical arrogance, and the blow was stunning.

"Gentlemen, I wish to consult you. Be pleased to retire for a minute, sir."

A discussion took place in the chaplain's absence. Williams was for dismissing him on the spot, but the others, who were cooler, would not hear of it. "We have made a false move," said they, "and he saw our mistake and made the most of it. Never mind! we shall catch him on other ground."

During this discussion Mr. Eden had not been idle; he went into Robinson's empty cell, and coolly placed there another inkstand, pen, and quire in the place of those Hawes had removed. Then glancing at his watch, he ran hastily out of the jail. Opposite the gate he found four men waiting; they were there by appointment.

"Giles," said he to one, "I think a gentleman will come down by the next train. Go to the station and hire Jenkyns' fly with the gray horse. Let no one have it who is not coming on to the jail. You two stay by the printing-press and loom till further orders. Jackson, you keep in the way too. My servant will bring you your dinner at two o'clock." He then ran back to the justices. They were waiting for him.

Mr. Williams began with a cutting coldness. "We did not wish to go to the length of laying a complaint against you before the bishop, but if you really prefer this to a friendly remonstrance——"

"I prefer the right thing to the wrong thing," was the prompt and calm rejoinder.

"The complaint shall be made."

Mr. Eden bowed, and his eyes twinkled. He pictured to himself this pompous personage writing to the Bishop of ——, to tell him that he objected to Mr. Eden's preaching; not that he had ever heard it, but that in attacking a great human vice it had hit a jailer.

"The next I think we can deal with. Mr. Hawes complains that you constantly interfere between him and the prisoners, and undermine his authority."

"I support him in all his legal acts, but I do oppose his illegal ones."

"Your whole aim is to subvert the discipline of the jail."

"On the contrary, I assure you I am the only officer of the jail who maintains the discipline as by law established."

"Am I to understand that you give Mr. Hawes the lie?"

"You shall phrase my contradiction according to your own taste, sir."

"And which do you think is likeliest to be believed?"

"Mr. Hawes by you gentlemen; Mr. Eden by the rest of the nation."

Here Mr. Palmer put in his word. "I don't think we ought to pay less respect to one man's bare assertion than to another's. It is a case for proof."

"Well, but, Palmer," replied Woodcock, "how can the jail go on with these two at daggers drawn?"

"It cannot," said Mr. Eden.

"Ah! you can see that."

"A house divided against itself!" suggested Mr. Eden.

"Well, then," said Mr. Woodcock, "let us try and give a more friendly tone to this discussion."

"Why not?—our weapons would bear polishing."

"Yes, you have a high reputation, Mr. Eden, both for learning and Christian feeling; in fact, the general consideration in which you are held, has made us more lenient in this case than we should have been with another man in your office."

"There you are all wrong."

"You can't mean that; make us some return for this feeling. You know and feel the value of peace and unity?"

"I do."

"Then be the man to restore them to this place."

"I will try."

"The governor and you cannot pull together—one must go."

"Clearly."

"Well, then, no stigma shall rest on you—you will be allowed to offer us your voluntary resignation."

"Excuse me, I propose to arrive at peace and unity by another route."

"But I see no other."

"If I turn Mr. Hawes out, it will come to the same thing, will it not?"

"Mr. Hawes?"

"Mr. Hawes."

"But you can't turn him out, sir," sneered Williams.

"I think I can."

"He has our confidence and our respect, and shall have our protection."

"Still I will turn him out, with God's help."

"This is a defiance, Mr. Eden."

"You cannot really think me capable of defying three justices of the peace!" said Mr. Eden, in a solemn tone, his eyes twinkling.

"Defiance! no," said Mr. Palmer innocently.

"Well, but, Palmer, his opposition to Mr. Hawes is opposition to us, and is so bitter that it leaves us no alternative: we must propose to the bench to remove you from your office."

Mr. Eden bowed.

"And meantime," put in Mr. Williams, "we shall probably suspend you this very day by our authority."

Mr. Eden bowed.

"We will not detain you any longer, sir," said Williams rather insolently.

"I will but stay to say one word to this gentleman, who has conducted himself with courtesy towards me. Sir, for your own sake, do not enter on this contest with me: it is an unequal one. A boy has just been murdered in this prison. I am about to drag his murderer into the light; why hang upon his skirts, and compel me to expose you to public horror as his abettor? There is yet time to disown the fell practices of—hell!" He looked at his watch. "There is half an hour. Do not waste it in acts which our superiors will undo. See, here are the prison rules; a child could understand them. A child could see that what you call 'the discipline' is a pure invention of the present jailer, and contradicts the discipline as by law established, and consequently that Josephs and others have been murdered by this lawless man. These *are* the prison rules, are they not? and here are the jailer's proceedings in the month of January—compare the two, and separate your honourable name from the contact of this caitiff, whose crimes will gibbet him in the nation's eyes, and you with him, unless you seize this chance and withdraw your countenance from him."

The three injustices rose by one impulse.

"Make your preparations to leave the jail," said Mr. Woodcock.

"Half an hour is quite enough under the circumstances," said Williams.

Palmer stood aghast—his mind was not fast enough to keep up.

Mr. Eden bowed and retired. He was scarcely out of the room when the justices drew up an order for his suspension from his office.

Mr. Hawes was next sent for.

"We have found the chaplain all you described him. Discipline is impossible with such a man; here is an order for his suspension." Hawes' eyes sparkled. "We will enter it into the book; meantime you are to see it executed." Hawes went out, but presently returned.

"He won't go, gentlemen."

"What do you mean by he won't go?" said Williams.

"I told him your orders; and he said, 'Tell their worships they are exceeding their authority, and I won't go.' Then I said, 'They give you half an hour to pack up, and then you must pack off.'"

"He! he! he! and what did he say?"

"'Oh, they give me half an hour, do they?' says he—'you take them this'—and he wrote this on a slip of paper—here it is."

The slip contained these words—*πολλα μεταξυ πελει κυλικος και χειλεος ακρου.*

While the justices were puzzling over this, Hawes added, "Gentlemen, he said in his polite way, 'If it is like the prison rules and beats their comprehension, you may tell them it means—

"There is many a slip
'Twixt the cup and the lip."'"

"Well, Mr. Hawes—what next?"

"'I am victualled for a siege,' says he, and he goes into his own room, and I heard him shoot the bolt."

"What does that mean?" inquired Mr. Palmer.

"It means, sir, that you won't get him out except by kicking him out." Hawes had been irritating their wounded vanity in order to get them up to this mark.

"Then turn him out by force," said Williams; but the other two were wiser. "No, we must not do that—we can keep him out if once he crosses the door."

"I will manage it for you, gentlemen," said Mr. Hawes.

"Do."

Mr. Hawes went out and primed Fry with a message to Mr. Eden, that a gentleman had ridden over from Oxford to see him, and was at his house.

Mr. Eden was in his room busy collecting and arranging several papers; he had just tied them up in a little portfolio when he heard Fry's voice at the door. When that worthy delivered his message his lip curled with scorn, but he said, "Very well.—I will disappoint the sly boobies," thought he. But the next moment, looking out of his window, he saw a fly with a gray horse coming along the road. "At last," he cried, and instantly unbolted his door, and issued forth with his little portfolio under his arm. He had scarce taken ten steps when a turnkey popped out from a corner, and stood sentinel over his room door, barring all return.

Mr. Eden smiled and passed on along the corridor. He descended from the first floor to the basement. Here he found Hawes affecting business, but not skilfully enough to hide that he was watching Mr. Eden out.

In the yard leading to the great door he found the injustices. "Aha!" thought he, "waiting to see me out."

He raised his hat politely. Williams took no notice. The others slight.

"There is many a slip
'Twixt the cup and the lip,"

said he to them, looking them calmly over, then sauntered towards the gate.

Mr. Hawes came creeping after and joined the injustices; every eye furtively watched the parson whom they had outwitted. Fry himself had gone to the lodge to let him out, and keep him out. He was but a few steps from the door. Hawes chuckled! his heart beat with exultation. Another moment and that huge barrier would be interposed for ever between him and his enemy, the prisoners' friend.

"Open the door, Mr. Fry," said the chaplain—Fry pulled it quickly open—"and let that gentleman in."

A middle-aged gentleman was paying off his fly. The door being thus thrown open, he walked quickly into the jail as if it belonged to him.

"Who is this?" inquired Mr. Williams sharply. The new-comer inquired as sharply, "The governor of this jail?"

Mr. Hawes stepped forward: "I am the governor." The new-comer handed him his card and a note.

"Mr. Lacy from the Home Office," said Mr. Hawes to the injustices. "These, sir, are the visiting justices."

Mr. Lacy bowed, but addressed himself to Mr. Hawes only. "Grave charges have been made against you, sir. I am here to see whether matters are such as to call for a closer investigation."

"May I ask, sir, who makes the charges against me?"

"The chaplain of your own jail."

"But he is my enemy, sir, my personal enemy."

"Don't distress yourself. No public man is safe from detraction. We hear an excellent account of you from every quarter but this one. My visit will probably turn to your advantage."

Hawes brightened.

"Is there any room in which I could conduct this inquiry?"

"Will you be pleased to come to the justices' room?"

"Yes. Let us go there at once. Gentlemen, you shall be present if you choose."

"It is right you should know the chaplain is cracked," said Mr. Williams.

"I should not wonder. Pray," inquired Mr. Lacy, "who

was that bilious-looking character near the gate when I came in?"

"Why, that was the chaplain."

"I thought so! I daresay we shall find he has taken a jaundiced view of things. Send for him, if you please, and let us get through the business as quickly as we can."

When Mr. Eden came, he found Mr. Lacy chatting pleasantly with his four adversaries. On his entrance the gentleman's countenance fell a little, and Mr. Eden had the pleasure of seeing that this man too was prejudiced against him.

"Mr.—Mr. ——?"

"Eden."

"Mr. Eden, be seated, if you please. You appear to be ill, sir?"

"I am recovering from a mortal sickness."

"The jaundice, eh?"

"Something of that nature."

"A horrible complaint."

Mr. Eden bowed.

"I have had some experience of it. Are you aware of its effect on the mind?"

"I feel its effect on the temper and the nerves."

"Deeper than that, sir—it colours the judgment. Makes us look at evreything on the dark side."

Mr. Eden sighed: "I see what you are driving at; but you confound effect with cause."

Mr. Lacy shrugged his shoulders, opened his portfolio, and examined a paper or two. "Mr. Hawes, you served Her Majesty in another way before you came here?"

"Five-and-twenty years, sir, man and boy."

"And I think with credit?"

"My will has been good to do my duty, whatever my abilities may be."

"I believe you distinguished yourself at sea in a storm in the West Indies?"

Mr. Williams put in warmly, "He went out to a vessel in distress in a hurricane at Jamaica."

"It was off the Mauritius," observed Mr. Eden, with a gleam of satisfaction.

"Well," said Mr. Lacy, "he saved other lives at the risk of his own, no matter where. Pray, Mr. Eden, does your reading and experience lead you to believe that a brave man is ever a cruel one?"

"Yes."

"There is a proverb that the cruel are always cowards."

"Cant! seven out of twelve are cowards and five brave."

"I don't agree with you. The presumption is all on Mr. Hawes' side."

"And only the facts on mine."

Mr. Lacy smiled superciliously. "To the facts let us go then. You received a note from the Home Office this morning. In compliance with that note have you prepared your case?"

"Yes."

"Will you begin by giving me an idea what the nature of your evidence will be?"

"A page or two of print—twenty of manuscript—three or four living witnesses, and—one dead body."

"Hum! he seems in earnest, gentlemen. How long do you require to state your case? Can it be done to-day?" Mr. Lacy looked at his watch half-peevishly.

"Half an hour," was the reply.

"Only half an hour?"

"Ay, but half an hour neat."

"What do you mean by 'neat'?"

"The minutes not to be counted that are wasted in idle interruptions or in arguments drawn from vague probabilities where direct evidence lies under our senses. For instance, that because I have been twenty-five years a servant of Christ with good repute, therefore it is not to be credited I could bring a false accusation; or that because Mr. Hawes was brave twenty years ago in one set of circumstances, therefore he cannot be cruel now in another set of circumstances."

Mr. Lacy coloured a little, but he took a pinch of snuff, and then coolly drew out of his pocket a long paper sealed.

"Have you any idea what this is?"

Mr. Eden caught sight of the direction; it was to himself.

"Probably my dismissal from my post?"

"It is."

Hawes quivered with exultation.

"And I have authority to present you with it if you do not justify the charges you have made against a brother officer."

"Good!" said Mr. Eden. "This is intelligent and it is just; the first gleam of either that has come into this dark hole since I have known it. I augur well from this."

"This is a character, gentlemen."

"To business, sir?" inquired Mr. Eden, undoing his portfolio.

"Sir," put in Mr. Hawes, "I object to an *ex-parte* statement from a personal enemy. You are here to conduct a candid inquiry, not to see the chaplain conduct a hostile one. I feel that justice is safe in your hands, but not in his."

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Eden; "I am to be dismissed unless I prove certain facts. See! the Secretary of State has put me on my defence. I will intrust that defence to no man but myself."

"You are keen, sir, but you are in the right; and you, Mr. Hawes, will be here to correct his errors, and to make your own statement after he has done, in half an hour."

"Ah, well," thought Hawes, "he can't do me much harm in half an hour."

"Begin, sir!" and he looked at his watch.

"Mr. Hawes, I want your book—the log-book of the prison."

"Get it, Mr. Hawes, if you please."

Mr. Hawes went out.

"Mr. Williams, are these the prison rules by Act of Parliament?" and he showed him the paper.

"They are, sir."

"Examine them closely, Mr. Lacy; they contain the whole discipline of this prison as by law established. Keep them before you. It is with these you will have to compare the jailer's acts. And now, how many times is the jailer empowered to punish any given prisoner?"

"Once!—on a second offence the prisoner, I see, is referred for punishment to the visiting justices."

"If, therefore, this jailer has taken upon himself to punish the same prisoner twice, he has broken the law."

"At all events, he has gone beyond the letter of this particular set of rules."

"But these rules were drawn up by lawyers, and are based on the law of the land. A jailer, in the eye of the law, is merely a head-turnkey set to guard the prisoners: for hundreds of years, he had no lawful right to punish a prisoner at all; that right was first bestowed on him with clear limitations by an Act passed in George the Fourth's reign, which I must show you, because that Act is a jailer's sole authority for punishing a prisoner at

all; here is the passage, sir; will you be kind enough to read it out?"

"Hum! '*The keeper of every prison shall have power to hear all complaints touching any of the following offences:—disobedience of the prison rules, assaults by one prisoner on another where no dangerous wound is given, profane cursing or swearing, any indecent behaviour at chapel, idleness or negligence in work. The said keeper may punish all such offences by ordering any offender to close confinement in the refractory or solitary cells, and by keeping such offenders upon bread and water only for any term not exceeding three days.*'"

"Observe," put in Mr. Eden, "he can only punish once, and then not select the punishment according to his own fancy: he is restricted to separate confinement, and bread and water, and three days."

Mr. Lacy continued: "'*In case any criminal prisoner shall be guilty of any repeated offence against the rules of the prison, or of any greater offence than the jailer is by this Act empowered to punish, the said jailer shall forthwith report the same to the visiting justices, who can punish for one month, or felons, or those sentenced to hard labour, by personal correction.*'"

"Such, sir," said Mr. Eden, "is the law of England, and the men who laid down our prison rules were not so ignorant or unscrupulous as to run their head against the statute law of the land. Nowhere in our prison rules will you find any power given to our jailer to punish any but minor offences, or to punish any prisoner more than once, or to inflict any variety of punishments. Such are this jailer's powers—now for his acts and their consequences. Follow me."

"Evans, open this cell. Jenkyns, what are you in prison for?"

"For running away from sarvice, your reverence."

"How often have you been punished since you came?"

"A good many times, your reverence."

"By the visiting justices?"

"No, sir! I was never punished by them, only by the governor."

"What have been your offences?"

"I don't know, sir; I never meant to offend at all, but I am not very strong, and the governor he puts me on a heavy crank, and then I can't always do the work,

and I suppose he thinks it is for want of the will, and so he gives it me."

"How has he punished you?"

"Oh, sometimes it is clamming; nothing but a twopenny roll all day, and kept to hard work all the same; sometimes my bed taken away, you know, sir, but mostly the punishment-jacket."

Mr. Lacy.—The punishment-jacket! what is that?

Mr. Eden.—Look in the prison rules and see if you can find a punishment-jacket; meantime come with me. Two gross violations of the law—repetition of punishment and variety of punishments. Evans, open this cell. What are you in for?

Prisoner (taking off his cap politely). — Burglary, gentlemen.

"Have you been often refractory since you came here?"

"Once or twice, sir; but——"

"But what?"

"These gentlemen are the visiting justices?"

"Yes!"

"They would be offended if I told the truth."

Mr. Lacy.—I am here from the Secretary of State, and I bid you tell the truth.

Prisoner.—Oh, are you, sir? Well then, the truth is, I never was refractory but once.

Mr. Lacy.—Oh, you were refractory once?

Prisoner.—Yes, sir!

Mr. Lacy.—How came that?

Prisoner.—Well, sir, it was the first week; I had never been in a separate cell before, and it drove me mad; no one came near me or spoke a word to me, and I turned savage; I didn't know myself, and I broke everything in the cell.

Mr. Eden.—And the other times?

Prisoner.—The other times, sir, I was called refractory, but I was not.

Mr. Eden.—What punishments have been inflicted on you by the governor?

Prisoner.—Well, sir, the black-cell, bread and water, and none of that; took away my gas once or twice, but generally it was the punishment-jacket.

Mr. Lacy.—Hum! the punishment-jacket.

Mr. Eden.—How long since you had the punishment-jacket?

Prisoner.—No longer than yesterday.

Mr. Eden.—Strip, my man, and let us look at your back.

The prisoner stripped and showed his back, striped livid and red by the cutting straps.

Mr. Lacy gave a start, but the next moment he resumed his official composure, and at this juncture Mr. Hawes bustled into the cell and fixed his eye on the prisoner. "What are you doing?" said he, eyeing the man.

"The gentleman made me strip, sir," said the prisoner, with an ill-used air.

"Have you any complaint to make against me?"

"No, sir!"

"Then what have you been humbugging us for all this time?" cried Mr. Williams contemptuously.

"For instance," cried Mr. Eden, in the same tone, glancing slily at Mr. Lacy, "how dare you show us frightful wales upon your back, when you know they only exist in your imagination—and mine?"

Mr. Lacy laughed. "That is true, he can't retract his wales, and I shall be glad to know how they came here." Here he made a note.

"I will show you by and by," said Mr. Eden.

The next two cells they went to, the prisoners assured Mr. Lacy that they were treated like Mr. Hawes' children.

"Well, sir," said Lacy, with evident satisfaction, "what do you say to that?"

"I say, use your eyes." And he wheeled the last prisoner to the light. "Look at this hollow eye and faded cheek; look at this trembling frame, and feel this halting pulse. Here is a poor wretch crushed and quelled by cruelty till scarce a vestige of man is left. Look at him! here is an object to pretend to you that he has been kindly used. Poor wretch! his face gives the lie to his tongue, and my life on it his body confirms his face. Strip, my lad."

Mr. Hawes interposed, and said it was cruel to make a prisoner strip to gratify curiosity. Mr. Eden laughed. "Come, strip," said he, "the gentleman is waiting." The prisoner reluctantly took off his coat, waistcoat, and shirt, and displayed an emaciated person and several large livid stripes on his back.

Mr. Lacy looked grave.

"Now, Mr. Lacy, you see the real reason why this humane gentleman did not like the prisoner to strip. Come to another. Before we go in to this one let me ask you one question: Do you think they will ever tell you the truth while Mr. Hawes' eye is on them?"

"Hum! they certainly seem to stand in awe of Mr. Hawes."

Hawes.—But, sir, you see how bitter the chaplain is against me. Where he is I ought to be, if I am to have fair-play.

"Certainly, Mr. Hawes, certainly! that is but fair."

Mr. Eden.—What are you in for?

Prisoner.—Taking a gentleman's wipe, gentlemen.

Mr. Eden.—Have you been often punished?

Prisoner.—Yes, your reverence! Why, you know I have; now didn't you save my life when they were starving me to death two months ago?

Mr. Lacy.—How did he save your life?

Prisoner.—Made 'em put me on the sick list, and put something into my poor belly.

Mr. Lacy.—What state was the man in, Mr. Eden?

Mr. Eden.—He was like a skeleton, and so weak that he could only speak two or three words at a time, and then had to stop a long while and recover strength to say two or three more. I did not think a human creature could be so near death and not die.

Mr. Lacy.—And did you know the cause?

Mr. Eden.—Frankly, I did not. I had not at that time fathomed all the horrors of this place.

Mr. Lacy.—Did you tell the chaplain at the time you were starving?

Prisoner.—No!

Mr. Eden.—And why not?

Mr. Hawes.—Simply because he never was starving.

Prisoner.—Well, I'll tell you, gentlemen; his reverence said to me, "My poor fellow, you are very ill—I must have you on the sick list directly," and then he went for the doctor. Now I knew if I got on the sick list they would fill my belly; so I said to myself, best let well alone. If I had told him it was only starvation, he would not interfere, I thought.

Mr. Lacy opened his eyes. Mr. Eden sighed.

Mr. Lacy.—You seem to have a poor opinion of Her Majesty's officers.

Prisoner.—Didn't know him, you see—didn't know his character; the humbug that was here before him would have let a poor fellow be kicked into his grave before his eyes, and not hold out a hand to save him.

Mr. Lacy.—Let me understand you. Were you kept without food?

Prisoner.—I was a day and a half without any food at all.

Mr. Lacy.—By whose orders?

Prisoner.—By the governor's there, and I was a week on a twopenny-loaf once a day, and kept at hard work on that till I dropped. Ah! your reverence, I shall never forget your face. I should be under the sod now if it was not for you.

Williams.—You rascal! the last time I was here you told me you never were so happy and comfortable.

Prisoner.—Ha! ha! ha! ha! hee! hee! haw! haw! ho! I ask your pardon for laughing, sir; but you are so precious green. Why, if I had told you the truth then, I shouldn't be alive to talk to you now.

"What, I should have murdered you, should I?" said Mr. Hawes, with a lofty sneer.

"Why, you know you would, sir," replied the prisoner firmly and respectfully, looking him full in the face before them all.

Mr. Lacy.—You don't think so, or you would not take these liberties with him now.

The prisoner cast a look of pity on Mr. Lacy. "Well, you *are* green! What, can't you see that I am going out to-day? Do you think I'd be such a cully as to tell a pack of greenhorns like you the truth before a sharp hand like our governor if I was in his power? No, my term of imprisonment expired at twelve o'clock to-day."

"Then why are you here?"

"I'll tell you, sir. Our governor always detains a prisoner for hours after the law sets him free; so then the poor fellow has not time to get back to his friends; so then he sleeps in the town, ten to one at a public-house; gets a glass, gets into bad company, and in a month or two comes back here; that is the move, sir. Bless you, they are so fond of us they don't like to part with us for good and all."

Mr. Lacy.—I do not for a moment believe, Mr. Hawes, that you have foreseen these consequences, but the detention of this man after twelve o'clock is clearly illegal, and you must liberate him on the instant.

Mr. Hawes.—That I will, and I wish this had been pointed out to me before, but it was the custom of the prison before my time.

Mr. Eden.—Evans, come this way—come in. How long have you been a turnkey here?

Evans.—Four years, sir.

Mr. Eden.—Do you happen to remember the practice of the late governor with respect to prisoners whose sentence had expired?

Evans.—Yes, sir! they were kept in their cells all the morning; then at eleven their own clothes were brought in clean and dry, and they had half an hour given them to take off the prison dress and put on their own. Then a little before twelve they were taken into the governor's own room for a word of friendly advice on leaving, or a good book, or a tract, or what not. Then at sharp twelve the gate was opened for them and——

Prisoner.—Good-bye, till we see you again.

Evans (sternly).—Come, my man, it is not for you to speak till you are spoken to.

Mr. Eden.—You must not take that tone with the gentleman, Evans; this is not a queen's prisoner, it is a private guest of Mr. Hawes. But time flies. If, after what we have heard and seen, you still doubt whether this jailer has broken the law by punishing the same prisoner more than once, and in more ways than one, fresh evidence will meet you at every step, but I would now direct your principal attention to other points. Look at Rule 37. By this rule each prisoner must be visited and conversed with by four officers every day, and they are to stay with him upon the aggregate half an hour in the day. Now the object of this rule is to save the prisoners from dying under the natural and inevitable operation of solitude and enforced silence, two things that are fatal to life and reason.

"But solitary confinement is legal."

Mr. Eden sighed heavily. "No, it is not: separate confinement, *i.e.*, separation of prisoner from prisoner, is legal, but separation of a prisoner from the human race is as illegal as any other mode of homicide. It never was legal in England; it was legal for a short time in the United States, and do you know why it has been made illegal there?"

"No, I do not."

"Because they found that life and reason went out under it like the snuff of a candle. Men went mad and died, as men have gone mad and died here through the habitual breach of Rule 37, a rule the aim of which is to guard separate confinement from being shuffled into

solitary confinement or homicide. Take twenty cells at random, and ask the prisoners how many officers come and say good words to them as bound by law; ask them whether they get their half-hour per diem of improving conversation. There is a row of shambles, go into them by yourself; take neither the head-butcher nor me."

Mr. Lacy bit his lip, bowed stiffly, and beckoned Evans to accompany him into the cells. Mr. Hawes went in search of Fry, to concert what was best to be done. Mr. Eden paced the corridor. As for Mr. Lacy, he took the cells at random, skipping here and there. At last he returned and sent for Mr. Hawes.

"I am sorry to say that Rule 37 has been habitually violated; the prisoners are unanimous; they tell me that so far from half an hour's conversation, they never have three minutes, except with the chaplain; and during his late illness they were often in perfect solitude. They tell me, too, that when you do look in, it is only to terrify them with angry words and threats. Solitude broken only by harsh language is a very sad condition for a human creature to lie in—the law, it seems, does not sanction it—and our own imperfections should plead against such terrible severity applied indiscriminately to great and small offenders."

"Oh, that is well said, that is nobly said," cried Mr. Eden with enthusiasm.

"Sir, I was put in here to carry out the discipline which had been relaxed by the late governor, and I have but obeyed orders, as it was my duty."

"Nonsense!" retorted Mr. Eden. "The discipline of this jail is comprised in these rules, of which eight out of ten are habitually broken by you."

"He is right there so far, Mr. Hawes: you are here to maintain, not an imaginary discipline, but an existing discipline strictly defined by printed rules, and it seems clear you have committed (through ignorance) serious breaches of these rules; but let us hope, Mr. Eden, that no irreparable consequences have followed this unlucky breach of Rule 37."

"Irreparable? No!" replied Mr. Eden bitterly. "The Home Office can call men back from the grave, can't it? Here is a list of five men all extinguished in this prison by breach of Rule 37. You start: understand me, this is but a small portion of those who have been done to

death here in various ways; but these five dropped silently like autumn leaves by breach of Rule 37. Rule 37 is one of the safety-valves which the law, more humane than the blockheads who execute it, has attached to that terrible engine, separate confinement."

"I cannot accept this without evidence."

"I have a book here that contains ample evidence; you shall see it. Meantime, I will just ask that turnkey about Hatchett, the first name on your list of victims. Evans, what did you find in Hatchett's cell when he was first discovered to be dying?"

"Eighteen loaves of bread, sir, on the floor in one corner."

"Eighteen loaves! I really don't understand."

"Don't you? How could eighteen loaves have accumulated but by the man rejecting his food for several days? How could they have accumulated unobserved if Rule 37 had not been habitually broken? Alas! sir, Hatchett's story, which I see is still dark to you, is as plain as my hand to all of us who know the fatal effects of solitary or homicidal confinement. Thus, sir, it was: Unsustained by rational employment, uncheered by the sound of a human voice, torn out by the roots from all healthy contact with the human race, the prisoner Hatchett's heart and brain gave way together. Being now melancholy mad, he shunned the food that was jerked blindly into his cell, like a bone to a wolf, by this scientific contrivance to make brute fling food to brute, instead of man handing it with a smile to grateful man: and so his body sank (his spirits and reason had succumbed before), and he died. His offence was refusing to share his wages with a woman from whom he would have been divorced, but that he was too poor to buy justice at so dear a shop as the House of Lords. The law condemned him to a short imprisonment. The jailer on his own authority substituted capital punishment."

"Is it your pleasure, sir, that I should be vilified and insulted thus to my very face, and by my inferior officer?" asked Hawes, changing colour.

"You have nothing to apprehend except from facts," was the somewhat cold reply. "You are aware I do not share this gentleman's prejudices."

"Would you like to see a man in the act of perishing through the habitual breach of Rule 37 in —— Jail?"

"Can you show me such a case?"

"Come with me."

They entered Strutt's cell. They found the old man in a state bordering on stupor. When the door was opened he gave a start, but speedily relapsed into stupor.

"Now, Mr. Lacy, here is a lesson for you. Would to God I could show this sight to all the pedants of science who spend their useless lives in studying the limbs of the crustaceonidunculæ, and are content to know so little about man's glorious body; and to all the State dunces who give sordid blockheads the power to wreck the brains and bodies of wicked men in these the clandestine shambles of the nation. Would I could show these and all other numskulls in the land this dying man, that they might write this one great truth in blood on their cold hearts and muddy understandings! Alas! all great truths have to be written in blood ere man will receive them."

"But what is your great truth?" asked Mr. Lacy impatiently.

"This, sir," replied Mr. Eden, putting his finger on the stupefied prisoner's shoulder and keeping it there; "that the human body, besides its grosser wants of food and covering, has its more delicate needs, robbed of which it perishes more slowly and subtly, but as surely as when frozen or starved. One of these subtle but absolute conditions of health is light. Without light, the body of a blind man pines as pines a tree without light. Tell that to the impostor Physical Science, deep in the crustaceonidunculæ and ignorant of the A B C of man. Without light man's body perishes, with insufficient light it droops; and here in all these separate shambles is insufficient light, a defect in our system which co-operates with this individual jailer's abuse of it. Another of the body's absolute needs is work; another is conversation with human beings. If, by isolating a vulgar mind that has collected no healthy food to feed on in time of dearth, you starve it to a standstill, the body runs down like a watch that has not been wound up. Against this law of Nature it is not only impious but idiotic to struggle. Almighty God has made man so, and so he will remain while the world lasts. A little destructive blockhead like this can knock God's work to pieces—*ecce signum*—but he can no more alter it while it stands than he can mend it when he has let it

down and smashed it. Feel this man's pulse and look at his eye: life is ebbing from him by a law of Nature as uniform as that which governs the tides."

"His pulse is certainly very low, and when I first felt it he was trembling all over."

"Oh, that was the agitation of his nerves—we opened the door suddenly."

"And did that make a man tremble?"

"Certainly; that is a well-known symptom of solitary confinement; it is by shattering a man's nerves all to pieces that it prepares the way for his death, which death comes sometimes in raging lunacy, of which eight men have died under Mr. Hawes' reign. Here is the list of deaths by lunacy from breach of Rule 37—eight. You will have the particulars by and by."

"I really don't see my way through this," said Mr. Lacy; "let us come to something tangible. What is this punishment-jacket that leaves marks of personal violence on so many prisoners?"

Now Hawes had been looking for this machine to hide it, but to his surprise neither he nor Fry could find it.

"Evans, fetch the infernal machine."

"Yes, your reverence."

Evans brought the jacket, straps, and collar from a cell where he had hidden them by Mr. Eden's orders.

"You play the game pretty close, parson," said Mr. Hawes, with an attempt at a sneer.

"I play to win: I am playing for human lives. This, sir, is the torture, marks of which you have seen on the prisoners; but your inexperience will not detect at a glance all the diabolical ingenuity and cruelty that lurks in this piece of linen and these straps of leather. However, it works thus: The man, being in the jacket, its back straps are drawn so tight that the sufferer's breath is impeded, and his heart, lungs, and liver are forced into unnatural contact. You stare. I must inform you that Nature is a wonderfully close packer. Did you ever unpack a human trunk of its stomach, liver, lungs, and heart, and then try to replace them? I have; and believe me, as no gentleman can pack like a shopman, so no shopman can pack like Nature. The victim's body and organs being crushed, these two long straps fasten him so tight to the wall that he cannot move to ease the frightful cramps that soon attack him. Then steps in by way of climax this

collar three inches and a half high. See, it is as stiff as iron, and the miscreants have left the edges unbound that it may do the work of a man-saw as well as a garrotte. In this iron three-handed grip the victim writhes and sobs and moans with anguish, and, worse than all, loses his belief in God."

"This is a stern picture," said Mr. Lacy, hanging his head.

"Until, what with the freezing of the blood in a body jammed together and flattened against a wall—what with the crushed respiration and the cowed heart, a deadly faintness creeps over the victim, and he swoons away!"

"Oh!"

"It is a lie—a base malignant lie!" shouted Hawes.

"I am glad to hear it, Mr. Hawes."

Here the justices with great heat joined in, and told Mr. Lacy he would be much to blame if he accepted any statement made against so respectable a man as Mr. Hawes. Then they all turned indignantly on Mr. Eden. That gentleman's eyes sparkled with triumph.

"I have been trying a long time to make him speak, but he was too cunning. It is a lie, is it?"

"Yes, it is a lie."

"What is a lie?"

"The whole thing."

"Give me your book, Mr. Hawes. What do you mean by 'the punishment-jacket,' an entrance that appears so constantly here in your handwriting?"

"I never denied the jacket."

"Then what is the lie of which you have accused me? Show me, that I may ask your pardon and His I serve for so great a sin as a lie."

"It is a lie to say that the jacket tortures the prisoners and makes them faint away; it only confines them. You want to make me out a villain, but it is your own bad heart that makes you think so, or say so without thinking it."

"Now, Mr. Lacy, I think we have caught our eel. This then is the ground you take; if it were true that this engine, instead of merely confining men, tortured them to fainting, then you say you would be a villain. You hesitate, sir; can't you afford to admit that, after all?"

"Yes, I can."

"But, on the other hand, you say it is untrue that this engine tortures?"

"I do."

"Prove that by going into it for one hour. I have seen you put a man in it for six."

"Now, do you really think I am going to make myself a laughing-stock to the whole prison?"

"Well, but consider what a triumph you are denying yourself, to prove me a liar and yourself a true man. It would be the greatest feat of dialectics the world ever saw; and you need not stand on your dignity—better men than you have been in it, and there goes one of them.—Here, Evans, come this way. We want you to go into the punishment-jacket."

The man recoiled with a ludicrous face of disgust and dismay. Mr. Lacy smiled.

"Now, your reverence, don't think of it. I don't want to earn no more guineas that way."

"What does he mean?" asked Mr. Lacy.

"I gave him a guinea to go into it for half an hour, and he calls it a hard bargain."

"Oh, you have been in it, then? Tell me, is it torture, or is it only confinement?"

"Con-finement! con-found such confinement, I say. Yes, it is torture, and the worst of torture. Ask his reverence, he has been in the oven as well as me."

Mr. Lacy opened his eyes wide. "What!" said he, with a half grin, "have you been in it?"

"That he has, sir," said Evans, grinning out in return. "Bless you, his reverence is not the one to ask a poor man to stand any pain he daren't face himself."

"There, there! we don't want to hear about his reverence," said his reverence very sharply. "Mr. Hawes says it is not torture, and therefore he won't face it. 'It is too laughable and painless for me,' says slippery Mr. Hawes. 'It *is* torture, and therefore I won't face it,' says the more logical Mr. Evans. But we can cut this knot for you, Mr. Lacy. There are in this dungeon a large body of men so steeped in misery, so used to torture for their daily food, that they will not be so nice as Messrs. Hawes and Evans. *Fiat experimentum in corpore vili.* Follow me, sir; and as we go, pray cast your eyes over the prison rules, and see whether you can find 'a punishment-jacket.' No, sir, you will not find even a Spanish collar, or a pillory, or a cross, far less a punishment-jacket which combines those several horrors."

Mr. Hawes hung back and begged a word with the justices. "Gentlemen, you have always been good kind friends to me. Give me a word of advice, or at least let me know your pleasure. Shall I resign—shall I fling my commission in this man's face, who comes here to usurp your office and authority?"

"Resign! Nonsense!" said Mr. Williams. "Stand firm. We will stand by you, and who can hurt you then?"

"You are very good, sir. Without you I couldn't put up with any more of this—to be baited and badgered in my own prison, after serving my Queen so many years by sea and land."

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Woodcock.

"And how can I make head against such a man as Eden—a lawyer in a parson's skin, an orator, too, that has a hundred words to say to my one?"

"Let him talk till he is hoarse; we will not let him hurt you."

"Thank you, gentlemen, thank you. Your wishes have always been my law. You bid me endure all this insolence; honoured by your good opinion and supported by your promise to stand by me, I will endure it." And Mr. Hawes was seen to throw off the uneasiness he had put on to bind the magistrates to his defence.

"They are coming back again."

"Who is this with them?"

Mr. Hawes muttered an oath. "It is a refractory prisoner I had sent to the dark cell. I suppose they will examine him next, and take his word against mine."

(*Chorus of Visiting Justices.*)—"Shame!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Mr. Eden had taken Mr. Lacy to the dark cells. Evans, who had no key of them, was sent to fetch Fry to open them. "We will kill two birds with one stone—disinter a patient for our leathern gallows, and a fresh incident of the —— Inquisition. Open this door, Mr. Fry."

The door was opened. A feeble voice uttered a quavering cry of joy that sounded like wailing, and a figure emerged so suddenly and distinctly from the blackness that Mr. Lacy

started. It was Thomas Robinson, who crept out white and shaking, with a wild, haggard look. He ran to Mr. Eden like a great girl. "Don't let me go back—don't let me go back, sir!" And the cowed one could hardly help whimpering.

"Come, courage, my lad," rang out Mr. Eden, "your troubles are nearly over. Feel this man's hand, sir."

"How he trembles! Why, he must be chicken-hearted."

"No! only he is one of your men of action, not of passive fortitude. He is imaginative, too, and suffers remorse for his crimes, without the soothing comfort of penitence. Twenty-four hours of that hole would deprive him, or any such nature, of the light of reason."

"Is this a mere opinion, or do you propose to offer me proof?"

"Six men driven by this means alone to the lunatic asylum, of whom two died there soon after."

"Hum! of what nature is your proof? I cannot receive assertion."

"Entries made at the time by a man of unimpeachable honesty."

"Indeed!"

"Who hates me and adores Mr. Hawes."

"Very well, Mr. Eden," replied the other keenly, "whatever you support by such evidence as that, I will accept as fact and act upon it."

"Done!"

"Done!" and Mr. Lacy smiled good humouredly, but it must be owned incredulously. "Is that proof at hand?" he added.

"It is. But one thing at a time—the leathern gallows is the iniquity we are unearthing at present. Ah! here are Mr. Hawes and his subordinates."

"Subordinates?"

"You will see why I call them so."

Mr. Williams.—I trust you will not accept the evidence of a refractory prisoner against an honest, well-tried officer, whose conduct for two years past we have watched and approved.

Mr. Lacy replied with dignity, "Your good opinion of Mr. Hawes shall weigh in his favour at every part of the evidence, but you must not dictate to me the means by which I am to arrive at the truth."

Mr. Williams bit his lip and was red and silent.

"But, your reverence," cried Robinson, "don't let me be called a refractory prisoner when you know I am not."

"Then what were you in the black-hole for?"

"For obeying orders."

"Nonsense! hum! Explain."

"His reverence said to me, 'You are a good writer; write your own life down. See how you like it when you look at it with reason's eye instead of passion's, all spread out before you in its true colours. Tell the real facts—no false coin, nor don't put any sentiments down you don't feel, to please me—I shall only despise you," said his reverence. Well, sir, I am not a fool, and so of course I could see how wise his reverence was, and how much good might come to my poor sinful soul by doing his bidding; and I said a little prayer he had taught me against a self-deceiving heart—his reverence is always letting fly at self-deception—and then I sat down and I said, 'Now I won't tell a single lie or make myself a pin better or worse than I really am.' Well, gentlemen, I hadn't written two pages when Mr. Fry found me out and told the governor, and the governor had me shoved into the black-hole, where you found me."

"This is Mr. Fry, I think?"

"My name is Fry."

"Was this prisoner sent to the black-hole merely for writing his life by the chaplain's orders?"

"You must ask the governor, sir. My business is to report offences and to execute orders; I don't give 'em."

"Mr. Hawes, was he sent to the black-hole for doing what the chaplain had set him to do by way of a moral lesson?"

"He was sent for scribbling a pack of lies without my leave."

"What! when he had the permission of your superior officer?"

"Of my superior officer?"

"Your superior in the department of instruction, I mean. Can you doubt that he is so with these rules before you? Let me read you one of them: '*Rule* 18. *All prisoners, including those sentenced to hard labour, are to have such time allowed them for instruction as the chaplain may think proper, whether such instruction withdraw them from their labour for a time or not.*' And again, by '*Rule* 30. *Each prisoner is to have every means of moral and religious*

instruction the chaplain shall select for each as suitable.' So that you have passed out of your own department into a higher department, which was a breach of discipline, and you have affronted the head of that department and strained your authority to undermine his, and this in the face of Rule 18, which establishes this principle: that should the severities of the prison claim a prisoner by your mouth, and religious or moral instruction claim him by the chaplain's, your department must give way to the higher department."

"This is very new to me, sir; but if it is the law——"

"Why, you see it is the law, printed for your guidance. I undo your act, Mr. Hawes; the prisoner Robinson will obey the chaplain in all things that relate to religious or moral instruction, and he will write his life as ordered, and he is not to be put to hard labour for twenty-four hours. By this means he will recover his spirits and the time and moral improvement you have made him lose. You hear, sir?" added he very sharply.

"I hear," said Hawes sulkily.

"Go on with your evidence, Mr. Eden."

"Robinson, my man, you see that machine?"

"Ugh! yes, I see it."

"For two months I have been trying to convince Mr. Hawes that engine is illegal. I failed; but I have been more fortunate with this gentleman who comes from the Home Office. He has not taken as many minutes to see it is unlawful."

"Stop a bit, Mr. Eden. It is clearly illegal, but the torture is not proved."

"Nor ever will be," put in Mr. Hawes.

"So then, Robinson, no man on earth has the right to put you into that machine."

"Hurrah!"

"It is, therefore, as a favour that I ask you to go into it to show its operation."

"A favour, your reverence, to you? I am ready in a minute."

Robinson was jammed, throttled, and nailed in the man-press. Mr. Lacy stood in front of him and eyed him keenly and gravely. "They seem very fond of you, these fellows."

"Can you give your eyes to that sight, and your ears to me?" asked Mr. Eden.

"I can."

"Then I introduce to you a new character—Mr. Fry. Mr. Fry is a real character, unlike those of romance and melodrama, which are apt to be either a streak of black paint or else a streak of white paint. Mr. Fry is variegated. He is a moral magpie; he is, if possible, as devoid of humanity as his chief; but to balance this defect, he possesses, all to himself, a quality, a very high quality, called Honesty."

"Well, that is a high quality, and none too common."

"He is one of those men to whom veracity is natural. He would hardly know how to tell a falsehood. They fly about him in this place like hailstones, but I never saw one come from him."

"Stay! does he side with you or with Mr. Hawes in this unfortunate difference?"

"With me!" cried Mr. Hawes eagerly.

Mr. Eden bowed assent. "Hum!"

"This honest Nero is zealous according to his light; he has kept a strict record of the acts and events of the jail for four years past, *i.e.*, rather more than two years of Captain O'Connor's jailership, and somewhat less than two years of the present jailer. Such a journal, rigorously kept out of pure love of truth by such a man, is invaluable. There no facts are likely to be suppressed or coloured, since the record was never intended for any eye but his own. I am sure Mr. Fry will gratify you with the sight of this journal. Oblige me, Mr. Fry!"

"Certainly, sir, certainly!" replied Fry, swelling with importance and gratified surprise.

"Bring it me at once, if you please."

Fry went with alacrity for his journal.

"Mr. Lacy," said Mr. Eden with a slight touch of reproach, "you can read not faces only, but complexions. You read in my yellow face and sunken eye prejudice; what do you read here?" and he wheeled like lightning and pointed to Mr. Hawes, whose face and very lips were then seen to be the colour of ashes. The poor wretch tried to recover composure and retort defiance; but the effort came too late: his face had been seen, and once seen, that look of terror, anguish, and hatred was never to be forgotten.

"What is the matter, Mr. Hawes?"

"W—w—when I think of my long services, and the

satisfaction I have given to my superiors, and now my turnkey's journal to be taken and believed against mine!"

(*Chorus of Justices.*)—"It is a shame!"

Mr. Eden (very sharply).—Against yours? What makes him think it will be against his? The man is his admirer and an honest man. What injustice has he to dread from such a source?

Mr. Lacy.—I really cannot understand your objection to a man's evidence whose bias lies your way; and I must say it speaks well for Mr. Eden that he has proposed this man in evidence.

At this juncture the magistrates, after a short consultation, informed Mr. Lacy that they had business of more importance to transact, and could give no more time to what appeared to them an idle and useless inquiry.

"At all events, gentlemen," replied Mr. Lacy, "I trust you will not leave the jail. I am not here to judge Mr. Hawes, but to see whether Mr. Eden's demand for a formal inquiry into his acts ought to be granted or refused. Now, unless the evidence takes some new turn, I incline to think I must favour the inquiry; that is to say, should the chaplain persist in demanding it."

"Which I shall."

"Should a royal commission be appointed to sit here, I should naturally wish to consult you as to the component members of the commission; and it is my wish to pay you the compliment usual in such cases of selecting one of the three commissioners from your body. But one question, gentlemen, before you go. Have you complied with No. 1 of these your rules? Have you visited every prisoner in his or her cell once a month?"

"Certainly not!"

"I am sorry to hear it. Of course at each visit you have closely examined this the jailer's book, a record of his acts and the events of the jail?"

"Portions of it are read to us; this is a form which I believe is never omitted—is it Mr. Hawes?"

"Never, gentlemen!"

"'Portions!' and 'a form!' What then are your acts of supervision? Do you examine the turnkeys, and compare their opinions with the jailer's?"

"We would not be guilty of such ungentlemanly behaviour!" replied Mr. Williams, who had been longing for some time to give Mr. Lacy a slap.

"Do you examine the prisoners apart, so that there can be no intimidation of them?"

"We always take Mr. Hawes into the cells with us."

"Why do you do that, pray?"

"We conceive that nothing would be gained by encouraging the refuse of mankind to make frivolous complaints against their best friend."

Here the speaker and his mates wore a marked air of self-satisfaction.

"Well, sir, has the present examination in no degree shaken your confidence in Mr. Hawes' discretion?"

"Not in the least."

"Nor in your own mode of scrutinising his acts?"

"Not in the least."

"That is enough! Gentlemen, I need detain you no longer from the business you have described as more important than this!"

Mr. Lacy shrugged his shoulders. Mr. Eden smiled to him, and said quietly, "As they were in the days of Shakespeare, so they were in the days of Fielding; as they were in the days of Fielding, so they are in the days of light; and as they are now, so will they remain until they are swept away from the face of the soil. (Keep your eye on Mr. Hawes, edging away there so adroitly!) It is not their fault, it is their nature; their constitution is rotten; in building them, the State ignored Nature, as Hawes ignores her in his self-invented discipline."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"That no *body* of men ever gave for nothing anything worth anything, nor ever will. Now knowledge of law is worth something; zeal, independent judgment, honesty, humanity, diligence, are worth something (are you watching Mr. Hawes, sir?); yet the State, greedy goose, hopes to get them out of a body of men for nothing!"

"Hum! Why has Mr. Hawes retired?"

"You know as well as I do."

"Oh, do I?"

"Yes, sir! the man's terror when Fry's journal was proposed in evidence, and his manner of edging away obliquely to the direction Fry took, were not lost on a man of your intelligence."

"If you think that, why did you not stop him till Fry came back with the book?"

"I had my reasons; meantime, we are not at a standstill.

Here is an attested copy of the journal in question; and here is Mr. Hawes' log-book: Fry's book intended for no mortal eye but his own; Hawes' concocted for inspection."

"I see a number of projecting marks pasted into Fry's journal!"

"Yes, sir; on some of these marks are written the names of remarkable victims recurring at intervals; on others are inscribed the heads of villainy—'the blackhole,' 'starvation,' 'thirst,' 'privation of exercise,' 'of bed,' 'of gas,' 'of chapel,' 'of human converse,' 'inhuman threats,' and the infernal torture called 'the punishment-jacket'—somewhat on the plan of 'Watt's Bibliotheca Britannica.' So that you can at will trace any one of Mr. Hawes' illegal punishments, and see it running like a river of blood through many hapless names; or you can, if you like it better, track a fellow-creature dripping blood from punishment to punishment, from one dark page to another, till release, lunacy, or death closes the list of his recorded sufferings."

Aided by Mr. Eden, who whirled over the leaves of Mr. Hawes' log-book for him, Mr. Lacy compared several pages of the two books. The following is merely a selected specimen of the entries that met his eye:—

Mr. Fry.	Mr. Hawes.
Joram: Writing on his can—bread and water.	*Joram:* Refractory — bread and water.
Joram: Bread and water.	
Joram: Bread and water.	*Joram:* Refractory — crank; bread and water.
Joram: Crank not performed —bread and water.	
Joram: Punishment-jacket.	
Joram: Refractory — crank; bread and water.	*Joram:* Refractory — bread and water.
Joram: Attempted suicide; insensible when found; had cut off pieces of his hair to send to his friends—sick-list.	*Joram:* Feigned suicide; cause, religious despondency—put on sick-list.
Josephs: Crank not performed; says he could not turn the crank No. 9; punishment-jacket.	*Josephs:* Refractory; said he would not work on crank 9; punishment-jacket.
Tomson: Communicating in chapel—dark cell twelve hours.	*Tomson:* Communicating — dark cells.

Mr. Fry.	Mr. Hawes.
Tomson: Bread and water.	
Tomson: Crank not performed—punishment-jacket.	*Tomson:* Refractory—jacket.
Tomson: Dark cells.	
Tomson: No chapel.	
Tomson: Dark cells.	
Tomson: Melancholy.	*Tomson:* Afflicted with remorse for past . crimes—surgeon.
Tomson: Very strange.	
Tomson: Removed to lunatic asylum.	*Tomson:* Removed to asylum.
Tanner: (Nine years old) Caught up at window; asked what he did there; said he wanted to feel the light—jacket and bread and water three days.	*Tanner:* Caught up at window; answered insolently—jacket.
Tanner: For repining—chapel and gas stopped until content.	*Tanner:* Refractory language—forbidden chapel until reformation

"Can I see such a thing as a prisoner who has attempted suicide?" inquired he, with lingering incredulity.

"Yes! there are three on this landing. Come first to Joram, of whom Mr. Hawes writes that he made a sham attempt on his life in a fit of religious despondency—Mr. Fry, that having been jacketed and put on bread and water for several days, he became depressed in spirits, and made a real attempt on his life. Ah! here is Mr. Fry; he is coming this way to tell you his first falsehood. Hawes has been all this while persuading him to it."

"Where is your journal, Mr. Fry?"

"Well, sir," replied Fry, hanging his head, "I can't show it you. I lent it to a friend, now I remember, and he has taken it out of the jail; but," added he with a sense of relief, "you can ask me any questions you like, and I'll answer them all one as my book."

"Well, then, was Joram's attempt at suicide a real or a feigned one?"

"Well, I should say it was a real one. I found him insensible, and he did not come to for best part of a quarter of an hour."

"Open his cell."

"Joram, I am here from the Secretary of State to ask you some questions. Answer them truly and without fear. Some months ago you made an attempt on your life."

The prisoner shuddered and hung his head.

"Don't be discouraged, Joram," put in Mr. Eden kindly; "this gentleman is not a harsh judge—he will make allowances."

"Thank you, gentlemen."

"What made you attempt your life?" persisted Mr. Lacy. "Was it from religious despondency?"

"That it was not. What did I know about religion before his reverence here came to the jail? No, sir, I was clammed to death."

"Clammed?"

"Yes, sir, clammed, and no mistake."

"North-country word for starved," explained Mr. Eden.

"No, sir, I was starved as well. It was very cold weather, and they gave me nothing but a roll of bread no bigger than my fist once a day for best part of a week. So, being starved with cold and clammed with hunger, I knew I couldn't live many hours more, and then the pain in my vitals was so dreadful, sir, I was obliged to cut it short. Ay! ay! your reverence, I know it was very wicked, but what was I to do? If I hadn't attempted my life I shouldn't be alive now. A poor fellow doesn't know what to do in such a place as this."

"Well," said Mr. Lacy, "I promise you your food shall never be tampered with again."

"Thank you, sir. Oh, I have nothing to complain of now, sir; they have never clammed me since I attempted my life."

Mr. Eden.—Suicide is at a premium here.

"What was your first offence?" asked Mr. Lacy.

"Writing on my can."

"What did you write on the can?"

"I wrote, 'I want to speak to the governor.'"

"Couldn't you ring and ask to see him?"

"Ring and ask! I had rung half a dozen times and asked to see him, and could not get to see him. My hand was blistered, and I wanted to ask him to put me on a different sort of work till such time as it could get leave to heal."

"Now, sir," said Mr. Eden, "observe the sequence of iniquity. A refractory jailer defies the discipline of the

prison. He breaks Rule 37 and other rules by which he is ordered to be always accessible to a prisoner. The prisoner being in a strait, through which the jailer alone can guide him, begs for an interview; unable to obtain this, in his despair he writes one innocent line on his can imploring the jailer to see him. None of the beasts say, 'What has he written?' they say only, 'Here be scratches,' and they put him on bread and water for an illegal period; and Mr. Hawes' new and illegal interpretation of 'bread and water' is aimed at his life. I mean, that instead of receiving three times per diem a weight of bread equal to the weight of his ordinary diets (which is clearly the intention of the bread and water statute), he has once a day four ounces of bread. So because a refractory jailer breaks the discipline, a prisoner with whom no breach of the discipline *originated* is feloniously put to death unless he 'cuts it short' by that which in every spot of the earth but —— Jail is a deadly crime in Heaven's eyes—self-murder."

"What an eye your reverence ha' got for things! Well, now, it doesn't sound quite fair, does it? But stealing is a dog's trick, and if a man behaves like a dog, he must look to be treated like one; and he will be, too."

"That is right, Joram; you look at it from that point of view, and we will look at it from another."

"Open Naylor's cell.—Naylor, what drove you to attempt suicide?"

"Oh, you know, sir."

"But this gentleman does not."

"Well, gents, they had been at me a pretty while one way and another; they put me in the jacket till I fainted away."

"Stop a minute; is the jacket very painful?"

"There is nothing in the world like it, sir."

"What is its effect? What sort of pain?"

"Why, all sorts! it crushes your very heart. Then it makes you ache from your hair to your heel, till you would thank and bless any man to knock you on the head. Then it takes you by the throat and pinches you and rasps you all at one time. However, I don't think but what I could have stood up against that if I had had food enough; but how can a chap face trouble and pain and hard labour on a crumb a day? However, what finally screwed up my stocking altogether, gents, was their taking away my gas. It was the dark winter nights, and there was

me set with an empty belly, and the cell like a grave. So then I turned a little queer in the head by all accounts, and I saw things that—hem!—didn't suit my complaint at all, you know."

"What things?"

"Well, gents, it is all over now, but it makes me shiver still, so I don't care to be reminded; let us drop it, if it is all the same to you."

"But, Naylor, for the sake of other poor fellows, and to oblige me."

"Oh, your reverence, if I can oblige you, that alters the case entirely. Well then, sir, if you must know, I saw 'Child of Hell' wrote in great letters of fire all over that side of the cell. Always every evening this was all my society, as the saying is: 'Child of Hell' wrote ten times brighter than gas."

"Couldn't you shut your eyes and go to sleep?" said Mr. Lacy.

"How could I sleep? And I did shut my eyes, and then the letters they came through my eyelids. So when this fell on the head of all my troubles, I turned wild, and I said to myself one afternoon, 'Now here is my belly empty, and nothing coming to it, and there is the sun a-setting, and by and by my cell will be brimful of hell-fire—let me end my troubles, and get one night's rest if I never see another.' So I hung myself up to the bar by my hammock-strap, and that is all I remember except finding myself on my back with Mr. Fry and a lot round me, some coaxing and some cursing; and when I saw where I was, I fell a-crying and blubbering to think that I had so nearly broke prison, and there they had got me still. I daresay Mr. Fry remembers how I took on."

"Ay, my man, I remember; we got no thanks for bringing you to."

"I was a poor unconverted sinner then," replied Mr. Naylor demurely, "and didn't know my fault and the consequences; but I thank you now with all my heart, Mr. Fry, sir."

"I am to understand, then, that you accuse the jailor of driving you to suicide by unlawful severities?"

"No, sir, I don't. I only tell you how it happened, and you shouldn't have asked me if you didn't care to know; and as for blaming folk, the man I blame the most is John Naylor. His reverence there has taught me to look

at home. If I hadn't robbed honest folk, I shouldn't have robbed myself of character and liberty and health, and Mr. Hawes wouldn't have robbed me of food and light and life well-nigh. Certainly there *is* a deal of ignorance and stupidity in this here jail. The governor has no headpiece; can't understand that a prisoner is made out of the same stuff as he is—skin and belly, heart, soul, bones an' all. I should say he wasn't fit to be trusted with the lives of a litter of pigs, let alone a couple of hundred men and women; but all is one for that; if he was born without any gumption, as the saying is, I wasn't, and I didn't ought to be in a fool's power; that is my fault entirely, not the fool's—ain't it now? If I hadn't come to the mill, the miller would never have grinded me! I sticks to that!"

"Well said, Naylor. Come, sir; One higher than the State takes precedence here; we must on no account shake a Christian frame of mind or rekindle a sufferer's wrongs. Yes, Naylor, forgive and you shall be forgiven. I am pleased with you, greatly pleased with you, my poor fellow. There is my hand!" Naylor took his reverence's hand, and his very forehead reddened with pride and pleasure at so warm a word of praise from the revered mouth.

They went out of the cell. Being now in the corridor, Mr. Eden addressed the Government official thus:—

"My proofs draw to a close. I could multiply instances *ad infinitum*—but what is the use? If these do not convince you, you would not believe though one rose from the dead. What do I say? Have not Naylor and Joram and many others come back from the dead to tell you by what roads they were driven there? One example remains to be shown: to a philosophical mind it is no stronger than the rest; but there are many men who can receive no very strong impression except through their senses. You may be one of these; and it is my duty to give your judgment every aid. Where is Mr. Fry? He has left us."

"I am coming to attend you, sir," cried Evans from above. "Mr. Fry is gone to the governor."

"Where are we going?" asked Mr. Lacy.

"To examine a prisoner whom the jailer tortured with the jacket, and starved, and ended by robbing him of his gas and his bed contrary to law. Evans, since you are here, relate all that happened to Edward Josephs on the fourth of this month—and mind you don't exaggerate."

"Well, sir, they had been at him for near a month, overtasking him, and then giving him the jacket, and starving him, and overtasking him again on his empty stomach, till the poor lad was a living skeleton. On the fourth the governor put him in the jacket, and there he was kept till he swooned."

"Ah!"

"Then they flung two buckets of water over him, and that brought him to. Then they sent him to his cell, and there he was in his wet clothes. Then him being there shaking with cold, the governor ordered his gas to be taken away—his hands were shaking over it for a little warmth when they robbed him of that bit o' comfort."

"Hum!"

"Contrary to law!" put in Mr. Eden.

"Well, sir, he was a quiet lad, not given to murmur, but at losing his gas he began to cry out so loud you might hear him all over the prison."

"What did he cry?"

"Sir, he cried, 'MURDER!'"

"Go on!"

"Then I came to him and found him shivering and dripping, and crying fit to break his poor heart."

"And did you do nothing for him?"

"I did what I could, sir. I took him and twisted his bed-clothes so tight round him the air could not get in, and before I left him his sobs went down and he looked like warm and sleeping after all his troubles. Well, sir, they can tell you better that did the job, but it seems the governor sent another turnkey called Hodges to take away his bed from under him."

"Oh!"

"Well, sir!—oh dear me! I hope, your reverence, I shall never have to tell this story again, for it chokes me every time." And the man was unable to go on for a while. "Well, sir, the poor thing, it seems, didn't cry out as he had about the gas, he took it quite quiet—that might have let them know, but some folk can see nothing till it is too late—and he gave Hodges his hand to show he bore him no malice. Eh dear! eh dear! Would to Heaven I had never seen this wicked place!"

"Wicked place indeed!" said Mr. Lacy solemnly. "You make me almost dread to ask the result."

"You shall see the result. Evans!"

Evans opened cell 15, and he and Mr. Eden stood sorrowful aside while Mr. Lacy entered the cell. The first thing he saw was a rude coffin standing upright by the window, the next a dead body lying stark upon a mattress on the floor. The official uttered a cry like the scream of a woman! "What is this? How dare you bring me to such a place as this?"

"This is that Edward Josephs, whose sufferings you have heard and pitied."

"Poor wretch! Heaven forgive us! What, did he—did he——?"

"He took one step to meet inevitable death—he hanged himself that same night by his handkerchief to this bar. Turn his poor body, Evans. See, sir, here is Mr. Hawes' mark upon his back. These livid stripes are from the infernal jacket, and helped to lash him into his grave. You are ill! Here! some wine from my flask! You will faint else!"

"Thank you! Yes, I was rather faint. It is past. Mr. Eden, I find my life has been spent among words—things of such terrible significance are new to me. God forgive us! how came this to pass in England in the nineteenth century! The —— scoundrel!"

"Kick him out of the jail, but do not swear; it is a sin. By removing him from this great temptation we may save even his blood-stained soul. But the souls of his victims! Oh, sir, when a good man is hurried to his grave, our lamentations are natural but unwise; but think what he commits who hurries thieves and burglars and homicides unprepared before their eternal Judge. In this poor boy lay the materials of a saint—mild, docile, grateful, believing. I was winning him to all that is good when I fell sick. The sufferings I saw and could not stop—they made me sick. You did not know that, when you let my discoloured cheeks prejudice you *against* my truth. Oh, I forgive you, dear sir! Yes, Heaven is inscrutable; for had I not fallen ill—yes, I was leading you up to Heaven, was I not? Oh, my lost sheep! my poor lost sheep!" And the faithful shepherd, at the bottom of whose wit and learning lay a heart simpler than beats in any dunce, forgot Hawes and everything else, and began to mourn by the dead body of his wandering sheep.

Then in that gloomy abode of blood and tears Heaven

wrought a miracle. One, who for twenty years past had been an official, became a man for full five minutes. Light bursts on him—Nature rushed back upon her truant son and seized her long-forgotten empire. The frost and reserve of office melted like snow in summer before the sun of religion and humanity. How unreal and idle appeared now the twenty years gone in tape and circumlocution! Away went his life of shadows—his career of watery polysyllabies meandering through the great desert into the Dead Sea. He awoke from his desk and saw the corpse of an Englishman murdered by routine, and the tears of a man of God dripping upon it.

Then his soul burst its desk, and his heart broke its polysyllables and its tapen bonds, and the man of office came quickly to the man of God and seized his hand with both his, which shook very much, and pressed it again and again and again, and his eyes glistened and his voice faltered, "This shall never be again. How these tears honour you! but they cut me to the heart. There! there! I believe every word you have told me now. Be comforted! you are not to blame! there were always villains in the world, and fools like us that could not understand or believe in an apostle like you. We are all in fault, but not you! Be comforted! Law and order shall be restored this very day, and none of these poor creatures shall suffer violence again or wrong of any sort—by God!"

So these two grasped hands and pledged faith, and for a while at least, joined hearts.

Mr. Eden thanked him with a grace and dignity all his own. Then he said with a winning sweetness, "Go now, my dear sir, and do your duty. Act for once upon an impulse. At this moment you see things as you will see them when you come to die. A light from Heaven shines on your path at this moment. Walk by it ere the world dims it. Go, and leave me to repent the many unchristian tempers I have shown you in one short hour, my heat and bitterness and arrogance—in this solemn place."

"His unchristian temper! poor soul! There, take me to the justices, Mr. Evans, and you follow me as soon as you like. Yes, my worthy friend, I will act upon an impulse for once. Ugh!"

Wheeling rapidly out of the cell, as unlike his past self as a pin-wheel in a shop-drawer and ditto ignited, he met

at the very door Mr. Hawes! "You have been witnessing a sad sight, sir, and one that nobody, I assure you, deplores more than I do," said Mr. Hawes, in a gentle and feeling tone.

Mr. Lacy answered Mr. Hawes by looking him all over from head to foot and back, then looking sternly into his eyes, he turned his back on him sharp, and left him standing there without a word.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE jailer had been outwitted by the priest. Hawes had sneaked after Fry to beg him for Heaven's sake—that was the phrase he used—not to produce his journal. Fry thought this very hard, and it took Hawes ten minutes to coax him over. Mr. Eden had calculated on this, and worked with the attested copy while Hawes was wasting his time suppressing the original. Hawes was too cunning to accompany Fry back to Mr. Lacy; he allowed five minutes more to elapse: all which time his antagonist was pumping truth into the judge a gallon a stroke. At last up came Mr. Hawes to protect himself and baffle the parson: he came, he met Mr. Lacy at the dead prisoner's door, and read his defeat.

Mr. Lacy joined the justice in their room. "I have one question to ask you, gentlemen, before I go: how many attempts at suicide were made in this jail under Captain O'Connor while sole jailer?"

"I don't remember," replied Mr. Williams.

"It would be odd if you did, for no one such attempt took place under him.

"Are you aware how many attempts at suicide took place during the two years that this Hawes governed a part of the jail, being kept in some little check by O'Connor, but not much, as unfortunately you encouraged the inferior officer to defy his superior? Five attempts at suicide during this period, gentlemen. And now do you know how many such attempts have occurred since Mr. Hawes has been sole jailer?"

"I really don't know. Prisoners are always shamming," replied Mr. Woodcock.

"I do not allude to feigned attempts, of which there have been several, but to desperate attempts, some of which have

left the prisoner insensible, some have resulted in his death—how many of these?"

"Four or five, I believe."

"Ah! You have not thought it worth while to inquire! Hum! well, fourteen at least. Come in, Mr. Eden. Gentlemen, you have neglected your duty. Making every allowance for your inexperience, it still is clear that you have undertaken the supervision of a jail, and yet have exercised no actual supervision; even now the life or death of the prisoners seems to you a matter of indifference. If you are reckless on such a point as this, what chance have the minor circumstances of their welfare of being watched by you? and, frankly, I am puzzled to conceive what you proposed to yourselves when you undertook an office so important and requiring so great vigilance. I say this, gentlemen, merely to explain why I cannot have the pleasure I did promise myself, of putting one of your names into the royal commission which will sit upon this prison in compliance with the chaplain's petition."

Mr. Eden bowed gratefully, and his point being formally gained, he hurried away to make up for lost time and visit his longing prisoners. While he passed like sunshine from cell to cell, Mr. Lacy took a note or two in solemn silence, and the injustices conferred. Mr. Palmer whispered, "We had better have taken Mr. Eden's advice." The other two snorted ill-assured defiance. Mr. Lacy looked up. "You will hold yourselves in readiness to be examined before the commission."

At this moment Mr. Hawes walked into the room without his mask, and in his own brutal voice—the voice he spoke to prisoners with—addressed himself with great insolence of manner to Mr. Lacy: "Don't trouble yourself to hold commissions over me. I think myself worth a great deal more to the Government than they have ever been to me. What they give me is little enough for what I have given them: and when insults are added to a man of honour and an old servant of the Queen, he flings his commission in your face;" and the unveiled ruffian raised his voice to a roar, and with his hand flung an imaginary commission into Mr. Lacy's face, who drew back astounded; then resuming his honeyed manner, Hawes turned to the justices. "I return into your hands, gentlemen, the office I received from you. I thank you for the support you have afforded me in my endeavours to substitute discipline

for the miserable laxity and slovenliness and dirt we found here, and your good opinion will always console me for the insults I have received from a crack-brained parson and his tools, in the jail and out of it."

"Your resignation is accepted," said Mr. Lacy coldly, "and as your connection with —— Jail is now ended, in virtue of my powers from the Secretary of State, which I here produce, I give you the use of the jailer's house for a week, that you may have time to move your effects, but, for many reasons, it is advisable that you should not remain in the *jail* a single hour. Be so good, therefore, as to quit the jail as soon as you conveniently can. One of the turnkeys shall assist you to convey to your house whatever you have in this building."

"I have nothing to take out of the jail, man," replied Hawes rudely, "except"—and here he did a bit of pathos and dignity—"my zeal for Her Majesty's service, and my integrity."

"Ah!" replied Mr. Lacy quietly, "you won't want any help to carry them."

Mr. Hawes left the room, bowing to the justices and ostentatiously ignoring the Government official. Mr. Williams shouted after him. "He carries our respect wherever he goes," said this magistrate, with a fidelity worthy a better cause. The other two hung their heads and did not echo their chief. The tide was turned against Jailer Hawes, and these two were not the articles to swim against the stream, even though that stream was truth.

Mr. Hawes took his time. He shook hands with Fry, who bade him farewell with regret. Who is there that somebody does not contrive to like? And rejecting even this mastiff's company, he made a gloomy, solitary progress through the prison for the last time. "How clean and beautiful it all is! It wasn't like that when I came to it and it never will again." Some gleams of remorse began to flit about that thick skull and self-deceiving heart, for punishment suggests remorse to sordid natures. But his strong and abiding feeling was a sincere and profound sense of ill-usage—long service—couldn't overlook a single error—ungrateful Government, etc. "Prison go to the devil now—and serve them right." At last he drew near the outer court, and there he met a sight that raised all the fiend within him.

There was Mr. Eden ushering Strutt into the garden, and telling Evans the old man was to pass his whole days there till he was better. "So that is the way you keep the rules now you have undermined me! No cell at all. I thought what you would come to. You haven't been long getting there."

"Mr. Hawes," replied the other with perfect good temper, "Rule 34 of this prison enjoins that every prisoner shall take daily as much exercise in the open air as is necessary for his health. You have violated this rule so long that now Strutt's health requires him to pass many more hours in the air than he otherwise would; he is dying for air and amusement, and he shall have both sooner than die for the want of them, or of anything I can give him."

"And what is it to *him?*" retorted Evans with rude triumph; "he is no longer an officer of this jail; he has got the sack and orders to quit into the bargain."

Fear is entertained that Mr. Evans had listened more or less at the door of the justices' room.

"Is this so, sir?" asked Mr. Eden gravely, politely, and without a shadow of visible exultation.

"You know it is, you sneaking, undermining villain; you have weathered on me, you have out-manœuvred me. When was an honest soldier a match for a parson?"

"Ah!" cried Mr. Eden; "then run to the gate, Evans, and let the men into the jail with the printing-press and the looms. They have been waiting four hours for this."

Hawes turned black with rage. "Oh, I know you made sure of winning: a blackguard that loads the dice can always do that. Your triumph won't be long. I was in this jail honoured and respected for four years till you came. You won't be four months before you are kicked out, and no one to say a good word for you. A pretty Christian! to suborn my own servants and rob me of my place and make me a beggar in my old age, a man you are not worthy to serve under, a man that served his country by sea and land before you were whelped, ye black hypocrite. You a Christian! you? If I thought that, I'd turn atheist or anything, you poor backbiting—tale-telling—sneaking—undermining—false witness-bearing"——

"Unhappy man," cried Mr. Eden, "turn those perverse eyes from the faults of others to your own danger. The

temptations under which you fell end here; then let their veil fall from your eyes, and you may yet bless those who came between your soul and its everlasting ruin. Your victims are dead; their eternal fate is fixed by you. Heaven is more merciful—it has not struck you dead by your victims' side; it gives you, the greatest sinner of all, a chance to escape. Seize that chance. Waste no time in passion and petulance—think only of your forfeited soul. Madman, to your knees! What! dare you die as you have lived these three years past? dare you die abhorred of Heaven? Fool! see yourself as every eye on earth and in heaven sees you. The land contains no criminal so black as you. Other homicides have struck hastily on provocation or stung by injury, or thrust or drawn by some great passion, but you have deliberately gnawed away men's lives. Others have seen their one victim die, but you have looked on your many victims dying, yet not spared them. Other homicides' hands are stained, but yours are steeped in blood. To your knees, MAN-slayer! I dare not promise you that a life given to penitence and charity will save so foul a soul, but it may, for Heaven's mercy is infinite. Seize on that small chance. Seize it like one who feels Satan clutching him and dragging him down to eternal flames. Life is short, eternity is close, judgment is sure. A few short years and you must meet Edward Josephs again before the eternal Judge. What a tribunal to face, your victims opposite you! There the long-standing prejudices that save you from a felon's death here will avail you nothing. There the quibbles that pass current on earth will be blasted with the lips that dare to utter and the hearts that coin them. Before Him who has neither body nor parts, yet created all the forms of matter, vainly will you pretend that you did not slay, because, forsooth, the weapons with which you struck at life were invisible, and not to be comprehended by a vulgar, shallow, sensual, earthly judge. There, too, the imperfection of human language will yield no leaf of shelter.

"Hope not to shift the weight of guilt upon poor Josephs there. On earth muddleheads will call his death and the self-murderer's by one name of 'suicide,' and so dream the two acts were one; but you cannot gull Omniscience with a word—the wise man's counter and the money of a fool. Be not deceived! As Rosamond took poison in her hand, and drank it with her own lips, and died by her own

act, yet died assassinated by her rival, so died Josephs. As men taken by pirates at sea, and pricked with cold steel till in despair and pain they fling themselves into the sea, so died Josephs and his fellows, murdered by you. Be not deceived! I, a minister of the gospel of mercy—I, whose character leans towards charity, tell you that if you die impenitent, so surely as the sun shines and the Bible is true, the murder of Edward Josephs and his brothers will damn your soul to the flames of hell for ever—and for ever—and for ever!

"Begone then, poor miserable creature! Do not look behind you. Fly from this scene, where crime and its delusions still cling round your brain and your self-deceiving heart. Waste no more time with me; a minute lost may be a soul lost. The avenger of blood is behind you. Run quickly to your own home—go up to your secret chamber, and there fall down upon your knees before your God, and cry loud and long to Him for pardon. Cry mightily for help—cry humbly and groaning for the power to repent. Away! away! Wash those red hands and that black soul in years and years of charity, in tears and tears of penitence, and in our Redeemer's blood. Begone, and darken and trouble us here no more."

The cowed jailer shrank and cowered before the thunder and lightning of the priest, who, mild by nature, was awful when he rebuked an impenitent sinner out of Holy Writ. He slunk away, his knees trembling under him, and the first fiery seeds of remorse sown in his dry heart. He met the printing-press coming in, and the loom following it (naturally); he scowled at them and groaned. Evans held the door open for him with a look of joy that stirred all his bile again. He turned on the very threshold, and spat a volley of oaths upon Evans. Evans at this put down his head like a bull, and running fiercely with the huge door, slammed it close on his heel with such ferocity, that the report rang like a thunder-clap through the entire building, and the ex-jailer was in the street.

Five minutes more, the printing-press and loom were reinstalled, and the punishment-jacket packed up and sent to London to the Home Office. Ten minutes more, the cranks were examined by the artist in iron Mr. Eden had sent for, and all condemned, it being proved that the value of their resistance stated on their lying faces was scarce

one-third of their actual resistance. So much for unerring * science!

Five minutes more, Mr. Eden had placed in Mr. Lacy's hands a list of prisoners to whom a free pardon ought now to be extended, some having suffered a somewhat shorter period but a greater weight of misery than the judges had contemplated in their several sentences; and others being so shaken and depressed by separate confinement pushed to excess, that their life and reason now stood in peril for want of open air, abundant light, and free intercourse with their species. At the head of these was poor Strutt, an old man crushed to clay by separate confinement recklessly applied. So alarming was this man's torpor to Mr. Eden, that, after trying in vain to interest him in the garden, that observer ventured on a very strong measure. He had learned from Strutt that he could play the fiddle; what does he do but runs and fetches his own violin into the garden, tunes it, and plays some most inspiriting, rollicking old English tunes to him! A spark came into the fishy eye of Strutt. At the third tune the old fellow's fingers began to work impatiently. Mr. Eden broke off directly, put fiddle and bow into Strutt's hand, and ran off to the prison again to arrest melancholy, despair, lunacy, stagnation, mortification, putrefaction, by every art that philosophy and mother-wit could suggest to Christianity.

This determined man had collected his teaching mechanics again, and he had them all into the prison the moment Hawes was out. He could not get the cranks condemned as monsters—the day was not yet come for that; so he got them condemned as liars, and in their place tasks of rational and productive labour were set to most of the prisoners, and London written to for six more trades and arts.

A copy of the prison rules was cut into eight portions, and eight female prisoners set to compose each her portion.

* The effect of this little bit of science may be thus stated: Men for two years had been punished as refractory for not making all day two thousand revolutions per hour of a 15-lb. crank, when all the while it was a *45-lb. crank* they had been vainly struggling against all day. The proportions of this gory lie never varied. Each crank tasked the Sisyphus three times what it professed to do. It was calculated that four prisoners, on an average crank marked 10 lb., had to exert an aggregate of force equal to one horse; and this exertion was prolonged, day after day, far beyond a horse's power of endurance, and in many cases on a modicum of food so scanty, that no horse ever foaled, so fed, could have drawn an arm-chair a mile.

Copies to be printed on the morrow and put up in every cell, according to the wise provision of Rule 10, defied by the late jailer for an obvious reason. Thus in an hour after the body of Hawes had passed through that gate, a firm and adroit hand was wiping his gloomy soul out of the cells, as we wipe a blotch of ink off a written page.

Care, too, was taken every prisoner should know the late jailer was gone for ever. This was done to give the wretches a happy night. Ejaculations of thanksgiving burst from the cells every now and then; by some mysterious means the immured seemed to share the joyful tidings with their fellows, and one pulse of hope and triumph to beat and thrill through all the life that wasted and withered there encased in stone; and until sunset the faint notes of a fiddle struggled from the garden into the temple of silence and gloom, and astounded every ear.

The merry tunes as Strutt played them sounded like dirges, but they enlivened him as they sighed forth. They stirred his senses, and through his senses his mind, and through his mind his body, and so the anthropologist made a fiddle help save a life, which fact no mortal man will believe whose habit it is to chatter blindfold about man and investigate the "crustaceonidunculæ."

The cranks being condemned, rational industry restored, and the law re-seated on the throne a manslaughtering dunce had usurped, the champion of human nature went home to drink his tea and write the plot of his sermon.

He had won a great battle, and felt his victory. He showed it, too, in his own way. On the evening of this great day his voice was remarkably gentle and winning, and a celestial light seemed to dwell in his eyes; no word of exultation, nor even of self-congratulation; and he made no direct mention of the prison all the evening. His talk was about Susan's affairs, and he paid his warm thanks to her and her aunt for all they had done for him. "You have been true friends, true allies," said he; "what do I not owe you? You have supported me in a bitter struggle, and now that the day is won, I can find no words to thank you as I ought."

Both these honest women coloured and glistened with pleasure, but they were too modest to be ready with praise or to bandy compliments.

"As for you, Susan, it was a masterstroke your venturing into my den."

"Oh, we turn bold when a body is ill, don't we, aunt?"

"I am not shy, for one, at the best of times," remarked the latter.

"Under Heaven you saved my life, at least I think so, Susan, for the medicinal power of soothing influence is immense: I am sure it is apt to be underrated; and then it was you who flew to Malvern and dragged Gulson to me at the crisis of my fate. Dear little true-hearted friend, I am sorry to think I can never repay you."

"You forget, Mr. Eden," said Susan, almost in a whisper, "I was paid beforehand."

I wish I could convey the native grace and gentle dignity of gratitude with which the farmer's daughter murmured these four words, like a duchess acknowledging a kindness.

"Eh?" inquired Mr. Eden; "oh! ah! I forgot," said he naively. "No! that is nonsense, Susan: you have still an immense Cr. against my name; but I know a way. Mrs. Davies, for as simple as I sit here, you see in me the ecclesiastic that shall unite this young lady to an honest man, who, report says, loves her very dearly; so I mean to square our little account."

"That is fair, Susan; what do you say?"

"La, aunt! why, I shouldn't look upon it as a marriage at all if any clergyman but Mr. Eden said the words."

"That is right," laughed Mr. Eden, "always set some little man above some great thing, and then you will always be—a woman. I must write the plot of my sermon, ladies, but you can talk to me all the same."

He wrote, and purred every now and then to the women, who purred to each other, and now and then to him. Neither Hawes nor any other irritation rankled in his heart, or even stuck fast in his memory. He had two sermons to prepare for Sunday next, and he threw his mind into them as he had into the battle he had just won. *Hoc agebat.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

His reverence in the late battle showed himself a strategist, and won without bringing up his reserves; if he had failed with Mr. Lacy, he had another arrow behind in his quiver.

He had been twice to the mayor, and claimed a coroner's jury to sit on a suicide: the mayor had consented, and the preliminary steps had been taken.

The morning after the jailer's dismissal the inquest was held. Mr. Eden, Evans, Fry, and others were examined, and the case came out as clear as the day and black as the night.

When twelve honest Englishmen, men of plain sense, not men of system, men taken from the public, not from public offices, sat in a circle with the corpse of a countryman at their knees, *fiebat lux;* 'twas as though twelve suns had burst into a dust-hole.

"Manslaughter!" cried they, and they sent their spokesman to the mayor, and said yet more light must be let into this dust-hole, and the mayor said, "Ay, and it shall too. I will write to London and demand more light." And the men of the public went to their own homes, and told their wives, and children, and neighbours, what cruelties and villainies they had unearthed, and their hearers, being men and women of that people, which is a god in intellect and in heart compared with the criticasters that try to misguide it with their shallow guesses and cant, and with the clerks that execute it in other men's names, cried out, "See now! What is the use our building courts of law or prisons unless they are to be open unto us? Shut us out—keep walls and closed gates between us and our servants—and what comes of our courts of law and our prisons? Why, they turn nests of villainy in less than no time."

The twelve honest Englishmen had hardly left the jail an hour, crying "Manslaughter!" and crying "Shame!" when all in a moment "Tomb!" fell a single heavy stroke of the great prison bell. The heart of the prison leaped and then grew cold—a long chill pause, then "Tomb!" again. The jurymen had told most of his fellow-sufferers how Josephs was driven into his grave—and now, "Tomb!" the remorseless iron tongue crashed out one by one the last sad, stern monosyllables of this sorrowfullest of human tales.

They put him in his coffin ("Tomb!"), a boy of sixteen, who would be alive now but that caitiffs, whom God confound on earth, made life an *impossibility* to him ("Tomb!"), and that Shallows and Woodcocks, whom God confound on earth, and unconscientious non-inspecting inspectors, flunkeys, humbugs, hirelings, whom God

confound on earth ("TOMB!") left these scoundrels month after month, and year after year unwatched, though largely paid by the Queen and the people to watch them ("TOMB!"). Look on your work, hirelings, and listen to that bell, which would not be tolling now if you had been men of brains and scruples instead of sordid hirelings. The priest was on his knees, praying for help from Heaven to go through the last sad office with composure, for he feared his own heart when he should come to say "ashes to ashes" and "dust to dust" over this hapless boy, that ought to be in life still. And still the great bell tolled, and many of the prisoners were invited kindly in a whisper to come into the chapel; but Fry could not be spared, and Hodges fiercely refused. And now the bell stopped, and as it stopped the voice of the priest arose, "I am the resurrection and the life."

A deep and sad gloom was upon all as the last sad offices were done for this poor young creature, cut short by foul play in the midst of them. And for all he could do the priest's voice trembled often, and a heavy sigh mingled more than once with the holy words. What is that? "THIS OUR BROTHER?"—a thief our brother?—ay! the priest made no mistake, those were the words; pause on them.

Two great characters contradicted each other to the face over dead Josephs. Unholy State said, "Here is the carcass of a thief whom I and society honestly believe to be of no more importance than a dog—so it has unfortunately got killed between us, no matter how; take this carcass and bury it," said unholy State. Holy Church took the poor abused remains with reverence, prayed over them as she prays over the just, and laid them in the earth, calling them "this our brother." Judge now which is all in the wrong, unholy State or holy Church—for both cannot be right.

Now while the grave is being filled in, judge, women of England and America, between these two—unholy State and holy Church. The earth contains no better judges of this doubt than you. Judge, and I will bow to your verdict with reverence. I know male cliques too well to feel for them in a case where the great capacious heart alone can enlighten the clever, little, narrow, shallow brain.

Thus in the nineteenth century—in a kind-hearted nation—under the most humane sovereign the world has ever

witnessed on an earthly throne—holy Church in vain denouncing the miserable sinners that slay the thief their brother—Edward Josephs has been done to death in the Queen's name—in the name of England—and in the name of the law.

But each of these great insulted names has its sworn defenders, its honoured and paid defenders.

It is not for us to suppose that men so high in honour will lay aside themselves and turn curs.

Ere I close this long story, let us hope I shall be able to relate with what zeal and honour statesmen disowned and punished wholesale manslaughter done in the name of the State, and with what zeal and horror judges disowned and punished wholesale manslaughter done in their name; and so, in all good men's eyes, washed off the blood with which a hireling had bespattered the State ermine and the snow-white robe of law.

For the present, the account between Josephs and the law stands thus: Josephs has committed the smallest theft imaginable. He has stolen food. For this the law, professing to punish him with certain months' imprisonment, has inflicted capital punishment; has overtasked, crucified, starved —overtasked, starved, crucified—robbed him of light, of sleep, of hope, of life; has destroyed his body, and perhaps his soul. Sum total—first page of account—

Josephs a larcenist and a corpse. The law a liar and a felon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Josephs has dropped out of our story. Mr. Hawes has got himself kicked out of our story. The other prisoners, of whom casual mention has been made, were never in our story, any more than the boy Xury in "Robinson Crusoe." There remains to us in the prison Mr. Eden and Robinson, a saint and a thief.

My readers have seen how the saint has saved the thief's life. They shall guess awhile how on earth Susan Merton can be affected by that circumstance. They have seen a set of bipeds acting on the notion that all prisoners are incurable; they have seen a thief, thus despaired of, driven towards despair, and almost made incurable through being

thought so. Then they have seen this supposed incurable fall into the hands of a Christian that held "it is never too late to mend;" and generally I think that, feebly as my pen has drawn so great a character, they can calculate, by what Mr. Eden has already done, what he will do while I am with Susan and George; what love, what eloquence, what ingenuity he will move to save this wandering sheep, to turn this thief honest, and teach him how to be honest, yet not starve.

I will ask my reader to bear in mind that the good and wise priest has no longer his hands tied by a jailer in the interests of the foul fiend. But then against all this is to be set the slippery heart of a thief, a thief almost from his cradle. Here are great antagonistic forces, and they will be in daily, almost hourly, collision for months to come. In life nothing stands still: all this will work goodwards or badwards. I must leave it to work.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mr. Eden's health improved so visibly, that Susan Merton announced her immediate return to her father. It was a fixed idea in this young lady's mind that she and Mrs. Davies had no business in the house of a saint upon earth, as she called Mr. Eden, except as nurses.

The parting of attached friends has always a touch of sadness, needless to dwell on at this time. Enough that these two parted as brother and young sister, and as spiritual adviser and advised, with warm expressions of Christian amity, and an agreement on Susan's part to write for advice and sympathy whenever needed.

On her arrival at Grassmere Farm there was Mr. Meadows to greet her. "Well, that is attentive!" cried Susan. There was also a stranger to her, a Mr. Clinton.

As nothing remarkable occurred this evening, we may as well explain this Mr. Clinton. He was a speculator, and above all, a setter on foot of rotten speculations, and a keeper on foot a little while of lame ones. No man exceeded him in the art of rose-tinting bad paper or parchment. He was sanguine and fluent. His mind had two eyes, an eagle's and a bat's; with the first he looked at the "pros," and with the second at the "cons" of a spec.

He was an old acquaintance of Meadows, and had come thirty miles out of the way to show him how to make a hundred per cent. without the shadow of a risk. Meadows declined to violate the laws of Nature, but said he, "If you like to stay a day or two, I will introduce you to one or two who have money to fling away." And he introduced him to Mr. Merton. Now that worthy had a fair stock of latent cupidity, and Mr. Clinton was the man to tempt it.

In a very few conversations he convinced the farmer that there were a hundred ways of making money, all of them quicker than the slow process of farming, and the unpleasant process of denying oneself superfluities and growing saved pennies into pounds.

"What do you think, John?" said Merton one day to Meadows; "I have got a few hundreds loose. I'm half minded to try and turn them into thousands for my girl's sake. Mr. Clinton makes it clear, don't you think?"

"Well, I don't know," was the reply. "I have no experience in that sort of thing, but it certainly looks well the way he puts it."

In short, Meadows did not discourage his friend from co-operating with Mr. Clinton; for his own part, he spoke him fair, and expressed openly a favourable opinion of his talent and his various projects, and always found some excuse or other for not risking a halfpenny with him.

CHAPTER XXX.

One day Mr. Meadows walked into the post-office, Farnborough, and said to Jefferies, the postmaster, "A word with you in private, Mr. Jefferies."

"Certainly, Mr. Meadows; come to my back-parlour, sir. A fine day, Mr. Meadows, but I think we shall have a shower or two."

"Shouldn't wonder. Do you know this five-pound note?"

"Can't say I do."

"Why, it has passed through your hands!"

"Has it? Well, a good many of them pass through my hands in the course of the year. I wish a few of 'em would stop on the road."

"This one did. It stuck to your fingers, as the phrase goes."

"I don't know what you mean, sir," said Jefferies haughtily.

"You stole it," explained Meadows quietly.

"Take care," cried Jefferies in a loud quaver, "take care what you say! I'll have my action of defamation against you double quick if you dare to say such a thing of me."

"So be it. You will want witnesses. Defamation is no defamation, you know, till the scandal is published. Call in your lodger."

"Ugh!"

"And call your wife!" cried Meadows, raising his voice in turn.

"Heaven forbid! Don't speak so loud, for goodness' sake!"

"Hold your tongue, then, and don't waste my time with your gammon," said Meadows sternly. Then resuming his former manner, he went on in the tone of calm explanation. "One or two in this neighbourhood lost money coming through the post. I said to myself, 'Jefferies is a man that often talks of his conscience—he will be the thief;' so I baited six traps for you and you took five. This note came over from Ireland; you remember it now?"

"I am ruined! I am ruined!"

"You changed it at Evans's the grocer's; you had four sovereigns and silver for it. The other baits were a note and two sovereigns and two half-sovereigns. You spared one sovereign, the rest you nailed. They were all marked by Lawyer Crawley. They have been traced from your hand, and lie locked up ready for next assizes. Good-morning, Mr. Jefferies."

Jefferies turned a cold jelly where he sat, and Meadows walked out, primed Crawley, and sent him to stroll in sight of the post-office.

Soon a quavering voice called Crawley into the post-office. "Come into my back-parlour, sir. Oh, Mr. Crawley, can nothing be done? No one knows my misfortune but you and Mr. Meadows. It is not for my own sake, sir, but my wife's. If she knew I had been tempted so far astray, she would never hold up her head again. Sir, if you and Mr. Meadows will let me off this once, I will take an oath on my bended knees never to offend again."

"What good will that do me?" asked Crawley contemptuously.

"Ah!" cried Jefferies, a light breaking in, "will money make it right? I'll sell the coat off my back."

"Humph! If it was only me, but Mr. Meadows has such a sense of public duty, and yet—hum!—I know a way to influence him just now."

"Oh, sir, do pray use your influence with him."

"What will you do for me if I succeed?"

"Do for you?—cut myself in pieces to serve you."

"Well, Jefferies, I'm undertaking a difficult task to turn such a man as Meadows, but I will try it, and I think I shall succeed; but I must have terms. Every letter that comes here from Australia you must bring to me with your own hands directly."

"I will, sir, I will."

"I shall keep it an hour or two, perhaps, not more; and I shall take no money out of it."

"I will do it, sir, and with pleasure. It is the least I can do for you."

"And you must find me ten pounds." The little rogue must do a bit on his own account.

"I must pinch to get it," said Jefferies ruefully.

"Pinch then," replied Crawley coolly, "and let me have it directly."

"You shall—you shall—before the day is out."

"And you must never let Meadows know I took this money of you."

"No, sir, I won't! Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Then I am very grateful, sir, and I won't fail, you may depend."

Thus the two battledores played with this poor little undetected one, whom his respectability no less than his roguery placed at their mercy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHENEVER Mr. Meadows could do Mr. Levi an ill turn he did, and *vice versâ*. They hated one another like men who differ about baptism. Susan sprinkled dewdrops of charity on each in turn.

Levi listened to her with infinite pleasure. "Your voice," said he, "is low and melodious, like the voice of my own people in the East." And then she secretly quoted the New Testament to him, having first ascertained that he had never read it; and he wondered where on earth this simple girl had picked up so deep a wisdom and so lofty and self-denying a morality.

Meadows listened to her with respect from another cause; but the ill offices that kept passing between the two men counteracted her transitory influence, and fed fat the ancient grudge.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"WILL FIELDING is in the town; I'm to arrest him as agreed last night?"

"Hum! no!"

"Why, I have got the judgment in my pocket and the constable at the public hard by."

"Never mind! he was saucy to me in the market yesterday—I was angry and—but anger is a snare: what shall I gain by locking him up just now? Let him go."

"Well, sir, your will is law," said Crawley obsequiously but sadly.

"Now to business of more importance."

"At your service, sir."

But the business of more importance was interrupted by a sudden knock at the outside door of Mr. Meadows' study.

"Well!"

"A young lady to see you."

"A young lady?" inquired Meadows with no very amiable air. "I am engaged. Do you know who it is?"

"It is Farmer Merton's daughter, David says."

"Miss Merton!" cried Meadows with a marvellous change of manner. "Show her up directly. Crawley, run into the passage, quick, man, and wait for signals."

He bundled Crawley out, shut the secret door, threw open both the others, and welcomed Susan warmly at the threshold.

"Well, this is good of you, Miss Merton, to come in and shine upon me in my own house."

"I have brought your book back," replied Susan, colouring a little; "that was my errand—that is," said

she, "that was partly my errand." She hesitated a moment. "I am going to Mr. Levi" — Meadows' countenance fell—"and I wouldn't go to him without coming to you, because what I have to say to him I must say to you as well. Mr. Meadows, do let me persuade you out of this bitter feeling against the poor old man. Oh, I know you will say he is worse than you are; so he is—a little; but then consider he has more excuse than you; he has never been taught how wicked it is not to forgive. You know it—but don't practice it."

Meadows looked at the simple-minded enthusiast, and his cold eye deepened in colour as it dwelt on her, and his voice dropped into the low and modulated tone which no other human creature but this ever heard from him. "Human nature is very revengeful. Few of us are like you. It is my misfortune that I have not oftener a lesson from you; perhaps you might charm away this unchristian spirit that makes me unworthy to be your—your friend."

"Oh no! no!" cried Susan; "if I thought so, should I be here?"

"Your voice and your face do make me at peace with all the world, Susan—I beg your pardon—Miss Merton."

"And why not Susan?" said the young lady kindly.

"Well, Susan is a very inviting name."

"La! Mr. Meadows," cried Susan, arching her brows, "why, it is a frightful name—it is so old-fashioned, nobody is christened Susan nowadays."

"It is a name for everything that is good and gentle and lovely." A moment more and passion would have melted all the icy barriers prudence and craft had reared round his deep heart. His voice was trembling, his cheek flushing; but he was saved by—an enemy.

"Susan!" cried a threatening voice at the door, and there stood William Fielding with a look to match.

Rage burned in Meadows' heart. He said brusquely, "Come in," and seizing a slip of paper, he wrote five words on it, and taking out a book, flung it into the passage to Crawley. He then turned towards W. Fielding, who by this time had walked up to Susan, who was on the other side of the screen.

"Was told you had gone in here," said William quietly, "so I came after you."

"Now that was very attentive of you," replied Susan

ironically. "It is so nice to have a sensible young man like you following for ever at one's heels—like a dog." A world of quiet scorn embellished this little remark.

William's reply was happier than usual. "The sheep find the dog often in their way, but they are all the safer for him."

"Well, I'm sure," cried Susan, her scorn giving way to anger.

Mr. Meadows put in: "I must trouble you to treat Miss Merton with proper respect when you speak to her in my house."

"Who respects her more than I?" retorted William; "but you see, Mr. Meadows, sheep are no match for wolves when the dog is away—so the dog is here."

"I see the dog is here and by his own invitation; all I say is, that if the dog is to stay here he must behave like a man."

William gasped at this hit; he didn't trust himself to answer Meadows; in fact, a blow of his fist seemed to him the only sufficient answer. He turned to Susan. "Susan, do you remember poor George's last words to me. with a tear in his eye and his hand in mine? Well, I keep my promise to him—I keep my eye upon such as I think capable of undermining my brother. This man is a schemer, Susan, and you are too simple to fathom him."

The look of surprise crafty Meadows put on here, and William Fielding's implied compliment to his own superior sagacity, struck Susan as infinitely ludicrous, and she looked at Meadows and laughed like a peal of bells. Of course he looked at her and laughed with her. At this all young Fielding's self-restraint went to the winds, and he went on, "But sooner than that, I'll twist as good a man's neck as ever schemed in Jack Meadows' shoes!"

At this defiance Meadows wheeled round on William Fielding and confronted him with his stalwart person and eyes glowing with gloomy wrath. Susan screamed with terror at William's insulting words and at the attitude of the two men, and she made a step to throw herself between them if necessary; but before words could end in blows a tap at the study door caused a diversion, and a cringing sort of voice said, "May I come in?"

"Of course you may," shouted Meadows; "the place is public. Anybody walks into my room to-day, friend or foe. Don't ask my leave—come in, man, whoever you are—Mr. Crawley? well, I didn't expect a call from you any more than from this one."

"Now don't you be angry, sir. I had a good reason for intruding on you this once. Jackson!"

Jackson stepped forward and touched William Fielding on the shoulder. "You must come along with me," said he.

"What for?" inquired Fielding.

"You are arrested on this judgment," explained Crawley, letting the document peep a moment from his waistcoat pocket. William threw himself into an attitude of defence. His first imqulse was to knock the officer down and run into another county, but the next moment he saw the folly and injustice of this, and another sentiment overpowered the honest, simple fellow—shame. He covered his face with both his hands and groaned aloud with the sense of his humiliation.

"Oh, my poor William!" cried Susan. "Oh, Mr. Meadows, can nothing be done?"

"Why, Miss Merton," said Meadows, looking down, "you can't expect me to do anything for him. If it was his brother now, Lawyer Crawley shouldn't ever take him out of my house."

Susan flushed all over. "That I am sure you would, Mr. Meadows," cried she (for feeling obscured grammar). "Now see, dear William, how your temper and unworthy suspicions alienate our friends; but father shan't let you lie in prison. Mr. Meadows, will you lend me a sheet of paper?"

She sat down, pen in hand, in generous excitement. While she wrote, Mr. Meadows addressed Crawley. "And now a word with you, Mr. Crawley. You and I meet on business now and then, but we are not on visiting terms that I know of. How come you to walk into my house with a constable at your back?"

"Well, sir, I did it for the best," said Crawley apologetically. "Our man came in here, and the street door was open, and I said, 'He is a friend of Mr. Meadows, perhaps it would be more delicate to all parties to take him indoors than in the open street.'"

"Oh yes!" cried William, "it is bitter enough as it is,

but that would have been worse—thank you for arresting me here—and now take me away and let me hide from all the world."

"Fools!" said a firm voice behind the screen.

"Fools!" At this word and a new voice Susan started up from the table, and William turned his face from the wall. Meadows did more. "Another!" cried he in utter amazement; "why, my house is an inn. Ah!"

Whilst speaking he had run round the screen and come plump upon Isaac Levi, seated in a chair, and looking up in his face with stern composure. His exclamation brought the others round after him, and a group of excited faces encircled this old man seated sternly composed.

"Fools!" repeated he, "these tricks were stale before England was a nation. Which of you two has the judgment?"

"I, sir," said Crawley, at a look from Meadows.

"The amount?"

"A hundred and six thirteen four."

"Here is the money. Give me the document."

"Here, sir." Levi read it. "This action was taken on a bill of exchange. I must have that too."

"Here it is, sir. Would you like an acknowledgment, Mr. Levi?" said Crawley obsequiously.

"No! foolish man. Are not these sufficient vouchers?"

"You are free, sir," said Crawley to William with an air of cheerful congratulation.

"Am I? Then I advise you to get out of my way, for my fingers do itch to fling you head foremost down the stairs."

On this hint out wriggled Mr. Crawley, with a semi-circle of bows to the company. Constable touched his front-lock and went straight away as if he was going through the opposite wall of the house. Meadows pointed after him with his finger, and said to Levi, "You see the road; get out of my house."

The old man never moved from his chair, to which he had returned after paying William's debts. "It is not your house," said he coolly.

The other stared. "No matter," replied Meadows sharply, "it is mine till my mortgage is paid off."

"I am here to pay it."

"Ah!"

"Principal and interest calculated up to twelve o'clock

this eleventh day of March. It wants five minutes to twelve. I offer you principal and interest—eight hundred and twenty-two pounds fourteen shillings and fivepence three-farthings—before these witnesses, and demand the title-deeds."

Meadows hung his head, but he was not a man to waste words in mere scolding. He took the blow with forced calmness, as who should say, "This is your turn—the next is mine."

"Miss Merton," said he almost in a whisper, "I never had the honour to receive you here before, and I never shall again.—How long do you give me to move my things?"

"Can you not guess?" inquired the other with a shade of curiosity.

"Why, of course you will put me to all the inconvenience you can. Come now, am I to move all my furniture and effects out of this great house in twenty-four hours?"

"I give you more than that."

"How kind! What, you give me a week perhaps?" asked Meadows incredulously.

"More than that, you fool! Don't you see that it is on next Ladyday you will be turned into the street? Aha! woman-worshipper, on Ladyday! A tooth for a tooth!" And the old man ground his teeth, which were white as ivory, and his fist clenched itself, while his eye glittered, and he swelled out from the chair, and literally bristled with hate—"A tooth for a tooth!"

"Oh, Mr. Levi," said Susan sorrowfully, "how soon you have forgotten my last lesson!"

Meadows for a moment felt a chill of fear at the punctiliousness of revenge in this Oriental whom he had made his enemy. To this succeeded the old hate multiplied by ten; but he made a monstrous effort and drove it from his face down into the recesses of his heart. "Well," said he, "may you enjoy this house as I have done this last twelve month!"

"That does you credit, good Mr. Meadows," cried simple Susan, missing his meaning.

Meadows continued in the same tone, "And I must make shift with the one you vacate on Ladyday."

"Solomon, teach me to outwit this dog."

"Come, Mr. Levi, I have visited Mr. Meadows, and now I am going to your house."

"You shall be welcome, kindly welcome," said the old man, with large and flowing courtesy.

"And will you show me," said Susan very tenderly, "where Leah used to sit?"

"Ah!"

"And where Rachel and Sarah loved to play?"

"Ah me! ah me! ah me! Yes! I could not show another these holy places, but I will show you."

"And will you forget awhile this unhappy quarrel and listen to my words?"

"Surely I shall listen to you; for even now your voice is to my ear like the wind sighing among the cedars of Lebanon, and the wave that plays at night upon the sands of Galilee."

"'Tis but the frail voice of a foolish woman, who loves and respects you, and yet," said Susan, her colour mantling with enthusiasm, "with it I can speak you words more beautiful than Lebanon's cedars or Galilee's shore. Ay, old man, words that made the stars brighter and the sons of the morning rejoice. I will not tell you whence I had them, but you shall say, surely they never came from earth—selfish, cruel, revengeful earth—these words that drop on our hot passions like the dew, and speak of trespasses forgiven, and peace and good-will among men."

Oh, magic of a lovely voice speaking the truths of Heaven! How still the room was as these goodly words rang in it from a pure heart. Three men there had all been raging with anger and hate; now a calming music fell like oil upon these human waves, and stilled them.

The men drooped their heads, and held their breath to make sure the balmy sounds had ceased; then Levi answered in a tone, gentle, firm, and low (very different from his last), "Susanna, bitterness fades from my heart as you speak, but experience remains;" he turned to Meadows, "When I wander forth at Ladyday she shall still be watched over though I be far away. My eye shall be here, and my hand shall still be so over you all," and raising his thin hand, he held it high up, the nails pointing downwards: he looked just like a hawk hovering over its prey. "I will say no bitterer word than that to-day;" and in fact he delivered it without apparent heat or malice.

"Come then with me, Susanna—a goodly name; it comes to you from the despised people: come like peace to my dwelling, Susanna; you know not this world's wiles as I do, but you can teach me the higher wisdom that controls the folly of passion and purifies the soul."

The pair were gone, and William and Meadows were left alone. The latter looked sadly and gloomily at the door by which Susan had gone out. He was in a sort of torpor. He was not conscious of William's presence.

Now the said William had a misgiving; in the country a man's roof is sacred; he had affronted Meadows under his own roof; and then Mr. Levi had come and affronted him there too. William began to doubt whether this was not a little hard; moreover, he thought he had seen Meadows brush his eye hastily with the back of his hand as Susan retired. He came towards Meadows with his old sulky, honest, hang-the-head manner, and said, "Mr. Meadows, seems to me we have been a little hard upon you in your own house, and I am not quite easy about my share on't."

Meadows shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly.

"Well, sir, I am not the Almighty to read folk's hearts, least of all such a one as yours, but if I have done you wrong, I ask your pardon. Come, sir, if you don't mean to undermine my brother with the girl you can give me your hand, and I can give you mine—and there 'tis."

Meadows wished this young man away, and seeing that the best way to get rid of him was to give him his hand, he turned round, and, scarcely looking towards him, gave him his hand. William shook it, and went away with something that sounded like a sigh. Meadows saw him out, and locked the door impatiently; then he flung himself into a chair, and laid his beating temples on the cold table: then he started up and walked wildly to and fro the room. The man was torn this way and that with rage, love, and remorse.

"What shall I do?" thus ran his thoughts. "That angel is my only refuge, and yet to win her I shall have to walk through dirt and shame and every sin that is. I see crimes ahead—such a heap of crimes, my flesh creeps at the number of them. Why not be like her? why not be the greatest saint that ever lived, instead of one more villain added to so many? Let me tear this terrible love out of my heart and die. Oh, if someone would but take me by the scruf of the neck and drag me to some other country a million miles away, where I might never see my tempter again till this madness is out of me! Susan, you are an angel, but you will plunge me to hell."

Now it happened, while he was thus raving and suffering

the preliminary pangs of wrong-doing, that his old servant knocked at the outside of the door, and thrust a letter through the trap; the letter was from a country gentleman, one Mr. Chester, for whom he had done business. Mr. Chester wrote from Lancashire. He informed Meadows he had succeeded to a very large property in that county—it had been shockingly mismanaged by his predecessor; he wanted a capable man's advice, and, moreover, all the estates thereabouts were compelled to be surveyed and valued this year, which he deplored, but since so it was, he would be surveyed and valued by none but John Meadows.

"Come by return of post," added this hasty squire, "and I'll introduce you to half the landed proprietors in this county."

Meadows read this, and, seizing a pen, wrote thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—Yours received this day at 1 p.m., and will start for your house at 6 p.m."

He threw himself on his horse, and rode to his mother's house. "Mother, I am turned out of my house."

"Why, John, you don't say so?"

"I must go into the new house I have built outside the town."

"What, the one you thought to let to Mr. James?"

"The same. I have got only a fortnight to move all my things. Will you do me a kindness now? will you see them put safe into the new house?"

"Me, John! why, I should be afraid something would go wrong."

"Well, it isn't fair of me to put this trouble on you at your age; but read this letter—there is fifteen hundred pounds waiting for me in the North."

The old woman put on her spectacles, and read the letter slowly. "Go, John! go by all means! I will see all your things moved into the new house—don't let them be a hindrance; you go. Your old mother will take care your things are not hurt moving, nor you wronged in the way of expense."

"Thank you, mother! thank you! they say there is no friend like a mother, and I daresay they are not far wrong."

"No such friend but God—none such but God!" said the old woman with great emphasis, and looking Meadows in the face with searching eye.

"Well, then, here are the keys of the new house, and here are my keys. I am off to-night, so good-bye, mother. God bless you!"

He had just turned to go, when by an unusual impulse he turned, took the old woman in his hands, almost lifted her off the ground, for she weighed light, and gave her a hasty kiss on the cheek; then he set her down and strode out of the house about his business.

When curious Hannah ran in the next moment, she found the old lady in silent agitation. "Oh dear! What is the matter, Dame Meadows?"

"Nothing at all, silly girl."

"Nothing! and look at you all of a tremble.

"He took me up all in a moment and kissed me. I daresay it is five-and-twenty year since he kissed me last. He was a curly-headed lad then."

So this had set the poor old thing trembling. She soon recovered her firmness, and that very evening Hannah and she slept in John's house, and the next day set to and began to move his furniture and prepare his new house for him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Peter Crawley received a regular allowance during his chief's absence, and remained in constant communication with him, and was as heretofore his money-bag, his tool, his invisible hand. But if anybody had had a microscope and lots of time, they might have discovered a gloomy hue spreading itself over Crawley's soul. A pleasant illusion had been rudely shaken.

All men have something they admire.

Crawley admired cunning. It is not a sublime quality, but Crawley thought it was, and revered it with pious, affectionate awe. He had always thought Mr. Meadows No. 1 in cunning, but now came a doleful suspicion that he was No. 2.

Losing a portion of his veneration for the chief he had seen out-manœuvred, he took the liberty of getting drunk, contrary to his severe command, and being drunk and maudlin, he unbosomed himself on this head to a low woman who was his confidante whenever drink loosened his tongue.

"I'm out spirits, Sal. I'm tebbly out spirits. Where shall we all go to? I didn't think there was great a man on earth z Mizza Meadows. But the worlz wide. Mizza Levi z greada man—a mudge greada man (hic). He was down upon us like a amma (hic). His Jew's eye went through our lill sgeme like a gimlet. 'Fools!' says he—that's me and Meadows—'these dodges were used up in our family before Lunnun was built. Fools!' Mizza Levi despises me and Meadows; and I respect him accordingly. I'm tebbly out spirits (hic)."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Farmer Merton received a line from Meadows, telling him he had gone into Lancashire on important business, and did not expect to be back for three months, except perhaps for a day at a time. Merton handed the letter to Susan.

"We shall miss him," was her remark.

"That we shall; he is capital company."

"And a worthy man into the bargain," said Susan warmly, "spite of what little-minded folk say and think. What do you think that Will Fielding did only yesterday?"

"I don't know."

"Well, he followed me into—there, it is not worth while having an open quarrel, but I shall hate the sight of his very face. I can't think how such a fool can be George's brother. No wonder George and he could not agree. Poor Mr. Meadows! to be affronted in his own house just for treating me with respect and civility. So that is a crime now!"

"What are you saying, girl? That young pauper affront my friend Meadows, the warmest man for fifty miles round! If he has, he shall never come on my premises again. You may take your oath of that."

Susan looked aghast. This was more than she had bargained for. She was the last in the world to set two people by the ears.

"Now don't you be so peppery, father," said she. "There is nothing to make a quarrel about."

"Yes, there is though, if that ignorant beggar insulted my friend."

"No! no! no!"

"Why, what did you say?"

"I say—that here is Mr. Clinton coming to the door."

"Let him in, girl, let him in. And you needn't stay. We are going to talk business."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MRS. MEADOWS preparing her son's new home, and defeating the little cheating tradesmen and workmen that fasten like leeches on such as carry their furniture to a new house; Hannah working round and round her in a state of glorious excitement; Crawley smelling of Betts' British Brandy, and slightly regretting he was not No. 1's tool (Levi's) instead of No. 2's, as he now bitterly called him, and writing obsequious letters to, and doing the dirty work of, the said No. 2; old Merton speculating, sometimes losing, sometimes winning; Meadows gone to Lancashire with a fixed idea that Susan would be his ruin if he could not cure himself of his love for her; Susan rather regretting his absence, and wishing for his return, that she might show him how little she sympathised with Will Fielding's suspicions, injustice, and brutality.

Leaving all this to work, our story follows an honest fellow to the other side of the globe.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GEORGE FIELDING found Farmer Dodd waiting to drive him to the town where he was to meet Mr. Winchester. The farmer's wife would press a glass of wine upon George. She was an old playmate of his, and the tear was in her eye as she shook his hand and bade Heaven bless him and send him safe back to "The Grove."

"A-taking of his hand and him going across sea! Can't ye do no better nor that?" cried the stout farmer; "I'm not a-looking, dame."

So then Mrs. Dodd put her hands on George's shoulders, and kissed him rustic-wise on both cheeks—and he felt a tear on his cheek, and stammered, "Good-bye, Jane! you and I were always good neighbours, but now we

shan't be neighbours for a while. Ned, drive me away, please, and let me shut my eyes, and forget that ever I was born."

The farmer made a signal of intelligence to his wife, and drove him hastily away.

They went along in silence for about two miles. Then the farmer suddenly stopped. George looked up, the other looked down. "Allan's Corner, George. You know 'The Grove' is in sight from here, and after this we shan't see it again on account of this here wood, you know."

"Thank ye, Ned! Yes, one more look—the afternoon sun lies upon it. Oh, how different it do seem to my eyes now by what it used when I rode by from market; but then I was going to it, now I'm going far, far from it. Never heed me, Ned—I shall be better in a moment. Heaven forgive me for thinking so little of the village-folk as I have done." Then he suddenly threw up his hands. "God bless the place and bless the folk," he cried very loud; "God bless them all, from the oldest man in it, and that is grandfather, down to Isaac King's little girl that was born yesternight! and may none of them ever come to this corner, and their faces turned towards the sea."

"Doan't ye, George; doan't ye! doan't ye! doan't ye!" cried Edward Dodd in great agitation.

"Let the mare go on, Ned; she is fretting through her skin."

"I'll fret her," roared the farmer, lifting his whip exactly as if it was a sword and a cut to be made at a dragoon's helmet. "I'll cut her liver out."

"No, ye shan't," said George. "Poor thing! she is thinking of her corn at the Queen's Head in Newborough: she isn't going across the sea—let her go, I've taken my last look and said my last word;" and he covered up his face.

Farmer Dodd drove on in silence, except that every now and then he gave an audible snivel, and whenever this occurred he always accommodated the mare with a smart cut—reasonable!

At Newborough they found Mr. Winchester. He drove George to the rail, and that night they slept on board the *Phœnix* emigrant ship. Here they found three hundred men and women in a ship where there was room for two hundred and fifty, accommodation for eighty.

Next morning, "Farmer," said Mr. Winchester gaily, "we have four hours before we sail; some of these poor people will suffer great hardships between this and Sydney; suppose you and I go and buy a lot of blankets, brawn, needles, canvas, greatcoats, felt, American beef, solidified milk, macintoshes, high-lows, and thimbles. That will rouse us up a little."

"Thank you, sir, kindly."

Out they went into the Ratcliffe Highway, and chaffered with some of the greatest rascals in trade. The difference between what they asked and what they took made George stare. Their little cabin was crowded with goods, only just room left for the aristocrat, the farmer, and Carlo. And now the hour came. Poor George was roused from his lethargy by the noise and bustle; and oh, the creaking of cables sickened his heart. Then the steamer came up and took them in tow, and these, our countrymen and women, were pulled away from their native land, too little and too full to hold us all. It was a sad sight, saddest to those whose own flesh and blood was on the shore and saw the steamer pull them away; bitterest to those who had no friend to watch them go.

How they clung to England! they stretched out their hands to her, and when they could hold to her no other way, they waved their hats and their handkerchiefs to their countrymen, who waved to them from shore—and so they spun out a little longer the slender chain that visibly bound them to her. And at this moment even the iron-hearted and the reckless were soft and sad. Our hearts' roots lie in the soil we have grown on.

No wonder, then, George Fielding leaned over the ship-side, benumbed with sorrow, and counted each foot of water as it glided by, and thought, "Now I am so much farther from Susan."

For a wonder, he was not sea-sick, but his appetite was gone from a nobler cause; he could hardly be persuaded to eat at all for many days.

The steamer cast off at Gravesend, and the captain made sail and beat down the Channel. Off the Scilly Isles a north-easterly breeze, and the *Phœnix* crowded all her canvas; when topsails, royals, sky-scrapers, and all were drawing, the men rigged out booms alow and aloft, and by means of them set studding-sails out several yards clear of the hull on either side; so on she ploughed, her canvas

spread out like an enormous fan or a huge albatross all wings. A goodly, gallant show; but, under all this vast and swelling plumage, an exile's heart.

Of all that smarted, ached, and throbbed beneath that swelling plumage, few suffered more than poor George. It was his first great sorrow, and all so new and strange.

The ship touched at Madeira, and then flew southward with the favouring gale. Many, many leagues she sailed, and still George hung over the bulwarks and sadly watched the waves. This simple-minded, honest fellow was not a girl. If they had offered to put the ship about and take him back, he would not have consented; but yet to go on almost broke his heart. He was steel and butter. His friend, the Hon. Frank Winchester, was, or seemed, all steel. He was one of those sanguine spirits that don't admit into their minds the notion of ultimate failure. He was supported, too, by a natural and indomitable gaiety. Whatever most men grumble or whine at, he took as practical jokes played by Fortune, partly to try his good-humour, but more to amuse him.

The poorer passengers suffered much discomfort, and the blankets, etc., stored in Winchester's cabin, often warmed these two honest hearts, as with pitying hands they wrapped them round some shivering fellow-creature.

Off Cape Verd, a heavy gale came on: it lasted thirty-six hours, and the distress and sufferings of the overcrowded passengers were terrible. An unpaternal Government had allowed a ship to undertake a voyage of twelve thousand miles with a short crew, short provisions, and just twice as many passengers as could be protected from the weather.

Driven from the deck by the piercing wind and the deluges of water that came on board, and crowded into the narrowest compass, many of these unfortunates almost died of sickness and polluted air; and when in despair they rushed back upon deck, horrors and suffering met them in another shape. In vain they huddled together for a little warmth, and tried to shield themselves with blankets stretched to windward. The bitter blast cut like a razor through their threadbare defences, and the water rushed in torrents along the deck, and crept cold as ice up their bodies, as they sat huddled, or lay sick and despairing on the hard and tossing wood; and whenever a heavier sea than usual struck the ship, a despairing scream burst from the women, and the good ship groaned

and shivered and seemed to share their fears, and the blast yelled into their souls, "I am mighty as Fate—as Fate! and pitiless! pitiless! pitiless! pitiless! pitiless!"

Oh then, how they longed for a mud cabin, or a hole picked with a pickaxe in some ancient city wall, or a cow-house, or a cart-shed, in their native land.

But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. This storm raised George Fielding's better part of man. *Integer vitæ scelerisque purus* was not very much afraid to die. Once when the *Phœnix* gave a weather roll that wetted the fore-sail to the yard-arm, he said, "My poor Susan!" with a pitying accent, not a quavering one. But most of the time he was busy crawling on all-fours from one sufferer to another with a drop of brandy in a phial. The wind emptied a glass of the very moisture, let alone the liquid, in a moment. So George would put his bottle to some poor creature's lips, and if it was a man, he would tell him in his simple way Who was stronger than the wind or the sea, and that the ship could not go down without His will. To the women he whispered that he had just had a word with the captain, and he said it was only a gale, not a tempest, as the passengers fancied, and there was no danger, none whatever.

The gale blew itself out, and then for an hour or two the ship rolled frightfully; but at last the angry sea went down, the decks were mopped, the *Phœnix* shook her wet feathers, and spread her wings again, and glided on her way.

George felt a little better; the storm shook him, and roused him, and did him good. And it was a coincidence in the history of these two lovers, that just as Susan under Mr. Eden's advice was applying the healing ointment of charitable employment to her wound, George too was finding a little comfort and life from the little bit of good he and his friend did to the poor population in his wooden hamlet.

After a voyage of four months, one evening the captain shortened sail, though the breeze was fair and the night clear. Upon being asked the reason of this strange order, he said knowingly, "If you get up with the sun perhaps you will see the reason."

Curiosity being excited, one or two did rise before the sun. Just as he emerged from the sea a young seaman called Paterson, who was in the foretop, hailed the deck.

"What is it?" roared the mate.

"Land on the weather-bow," sung out the seaman in reply.

Land! In one moment the word ran like electric fire through all the veins of the *Phœnix;* the upper deck was crowded in a minute, but all were disappointed. No one saw land but Mr. Paterson, whose elevation and keen sight gave him an advantage. But a heavenly smell as of a region of cowslips came and perfumed the air and rejoiced all the hearts; at six o'clock a something like a narrow cloud broke the watery horizon on the weather-bow. All sail was made, and at noon the coast of Australia glittered like a diamond under their lee.

Then the three hundred prisoners fell into a wild excitement—some became irritable, others absurdly affectionate to people they did not care a button for. The captain himself was not free from the intoxication; he walked the deck in jerks instead of his usual roll, and clapped on sail as if he would fly on shore.

At half-past one they glided out of the open sea into the Port Jackson River. They were now in a harbour fifteen miles long, landlocked on both sides, and not a shoal or a rock in it. This wonderful haven, in which all the navies that float, or ever will float, might manœuvre all day and ride at anchor all night without jostling, was the sea-avenue by which they approached a land of wonders.

It was the second of December. The sky was purple, and the sun blazed in its centre. The land glittered like a thousand emeralds beneath his glowing smile, and the waves seemed to drink his glory and melt it into their tints, so rich were the flakes of burning gold that shone in the heart of their transparent lovely blue.

Oh, what a heavenly land! and after four months' prison at sea!

Our humble hero's heart beat high with hope. Surely in so glorious a place as this he could make a thousand pounds, and then dart back with it to Susan. Long before the ship came to an anchor, George got a sheet of paper, and by a natural impulse wrote to Susan a letter, telling her all the misery the *Phœnix* and her passengers had come through between London Bridge and Sydney Cove, and as soon as he had written it he tore it up and threw it into the water. "It would have vexed her to hear what I have gone through. Time

enough to tell her that when I am home again, sitting by the fire with her hand in mine."

So then he tried again, and wrote a cheerful letter, and concealed all his troubles except his sorrow at being obliged to go so far from her even for a time. "But it is only for a time, Susan dear. And, Susan dear, I've got a good friend here, and one that can feel for us, for he is here on the same errand as I am. I am to bide with him six months and help him the best I can, and so I shall learn how matters are managed here; and after that I am to set up on my own account; and, Susan dear, I do think, by all I can see, there is money to be made here. Heaven knows my heart was never much set on gain, but it is now because it is the road to you. Please tell Will, Carlo has been a great comfort to me and is a general favourite. He pointed a rat on board ship, but it was excusable, and him cooped up so long, and had almost forgotten the smell of a bird, I daresay; and if anybody comes to make-believe to threaten me, he is ready to pull them down in a minute. So tell Will this, and that I do think his master is as much my friend at home as the dog is out here.

"Susan dear, I do beg of you as a great favour to keep up your heart, and not give way to grief or desponding feelings: I don't; leastways I won't. Poor Mr. Winchester is here on the same errand as I am. But I often think his heart is stouter than mine, which is much to his credit, and little to mine. Susan dear, I have come to the country that is farther from Grassmere than any other in the globe —that seems hard; and my very face is turned the opposite way to yours as I walk, but nothing can ever turn my heart away from my Susan. I desire my respects to Mr. Merton, and that you would tell him I will make the one thousand pounds, please God. But I hope you will pray for me, Susan, that I may have that success; you are so good that I do think the Almighty will hear you sooner than me or anyone. So no more at present, dear Susan, but remain, with sincere respect, your loving servant and faithful lover till death, GEORGE FIELDING."

They landed. Mr. Winchester purchased the right of feeding cattle over a large tract a hundred miles distant from Sydney, and after a few days spent in that capital, started with their waggons into the interior. There, for

about five months, George was Mr. Winchester's factotum, and though he had himself much to learn, the country and its habits being new to him, still he saved his friend from fundamental errors, and from five in the morning till eight at night put zeal, honesty, and the muscular strength of two ordinary men at his friend's service.

At the expiration of this period Mr. Winchester said to him one evening, "George, I can do my work alone now, and the time is come to show my sense of your services and friendship. I have bought a run for you about eight miles from here, and now you are to choose five hundred sheep and thirty beasts; the black pony you ride goes with them."

"Oh no, sir! it is enough to rob you of them at all without me going and taking the pick of them."

"Well, will you consent to pen the flocks, and then lift one hurdle and take them as they come out, so many from each lot?"

"That I consent to, sir, and remain your debtor for life."

"I can't see it; I set *my life* a great deal higher than sheep-skin."

Mr. Winchester did not stop there; he forced a hundred pounds upon George. "If you start in any business with an empty pocket, you are a gone coon."

So these two friends parted with mutual esteem, and George set to work by prudence and vigour to make the thousand pounds.

One thousand pounds! This one is to have the woman he loves for a thousand pounds: that sounds cheap. Heaven upon earth for a thousand pounds! What is a thousand pounds? Nothing. There are slippery men that gain this in a week by time bargains, trading on capital of round O's; others who net as much in an evening, and as honourably, by cards. There are merchants who net twenty times this sum by a single operation.

"An operation?" inquires Belgravia.

This is an operation: you send forth a man not given to drink, and consequently chatter, to Amsterdam; another not given to drink and chatter to New Orleans; another n. g. t. d. and c. to Bordeaux, Cadiz, Canton, Liverpool, Japan, and where not all, with secret instructions. Then at an appointed day all the men n. g. t. d. and c. begin gradually, secretly, cannily, to buy up in all those places all the lac-dye, or something of the kind, that you and I thought there was about thirty pounds of in creation. This done,

Mercator raises the price of lac-dye or what not throughout Europe. If he is greedy, and raises it a halfpenny a pound, perhaps commerce revolts and invokes nature against so vast an oppression, and nature comes and crushes our speculator. But if he be wise, and puts on what mankind can bear, say three mites per pound, then he sells tons and tons at this fractional profit on each pound, and makes fourteen thousand pounds by lac-dye or the like, of which you and I thought creation held thirty, or at most thirty-two pounds.

These men are the warriors of commerce; but its smaller captains, watching the fluctuations of this or that market, can often turn a thousand pounds ere we could say J. R. Far more than a thousand pounds have been made in a year by selling pastry off a table in the boulevards of Paris.

In matters practical a single idea is worth thousands.

This nation, being always in a hurry, paid four thousand pounds to a man to show them how to separate letter-stamps in a hurry. "Punch the divisions full of little holes," said he, and he held out his hand for the four thousand pounds; and now test his invention, tear one head from another in a hurry, and you will see that money sometimes goes cheaper than invention.

A single idea is sometimes worth a thousand pounds in a book, though books are by far the least lucrative channels ideas run in; Mr. Bradshaw's duodecimo to wit—profit, seven thousand pounds per annum.

A thousand pounds! How many men have toiled for money all their lives, have met with success, yet never reached a thousand pounds!

Eight thousand servants, fed and half-clothed at their master's expense, have put by for forty years, and yet, not even by aid of interest and compound interest, and perquisites, and commissions squeezed out of little tradesmen, and other time-honoured embezzlements, have reached the rubicon of four figures. Five thousand little shopkeepers, active, intelligent, and greedy, have bought wholesale and sold retail, yet never mounted so high as this above rent, housekeeping, bad debts, and casualties. Many a writer of genius has charmed his nation and adorned her language, yet never held a thousand pounds in his hand even for a day. Many a great painter has written the world-wide language of form and colour, and attained to

European fame, but not to a thousand pounds sterling English.

Among all these aspirants, and a million more, George Fielding now made one, urged and possessed by as keen an incentive as ever spurred a man.

George's materials were five hundred sheep, twenty cows, ten bullocks, two large sheep-dogs, and Carlo. It was a keen, clear, frosty day in July when he drove his herd to his own pasture. His heart beat high that morning. He left Abner, his shepherd, a white native of the colony, to drive the slow cattle. He strode out in advance, and scarce felt the ground beneath his feet. The thermometer was at 28°, yet his coat was only tied round his neck by the sleeves as he swept along, all health, fire, manhood, love, and hope. He marched this day like dear Smollett's lines, whose thoughts, though he had never heard them, fired his heart—

> "Thy spirit, Independence, let me share,
> Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye;
> Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
> Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky."

He was on the ground long before Abner, and set to work building a roofless hut on the west side of some thick bushes, and hard by the only water near at hand; and here he fixed his headquarters, stretched a blanket across the hut for a roof, and slept his own master.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

At the end of six months George Fielding's stock had varied thus: four hundred lambs, ten calves, fifteen cows, four hundred sheep. He had lost some sheep in lambing, and one cow in calving; but these casualties every feeder counts on: he had been lucky on the whole. He had sold about eighty sheep, and eaten a few, but not many, and of his hundred pounds only five pounds were gone; against which and the decline in cows were to be placed the calves and lambs.

George considered himself eighty pounds richer in substance than six months ago. It so happened that on every side of George but one were nomads, shepherd-kings—

fellows with a thousand head of horned cattle, and sheep like white pebbles by the sea; but on his right hand was another small bucolical, a Scotchman, who had started with less means than himself and was slowly working his way, making a halfpenny and saving a penny after the manner of his nation. These two were mighty dissimilar, but they were on a level as to means, and near neighbours, and that drew them together. In particular, they used to pay each other friendly visits on Sunday evenings, and M'Laughlan would read a good book to George, for he was strict in his observances; but after that the pair would argue points of husbandry. But one Sunday that George, admiring his stock, inadvertently proposed to him an exchange of certain animals, he rebuked the young man with awful gravity.

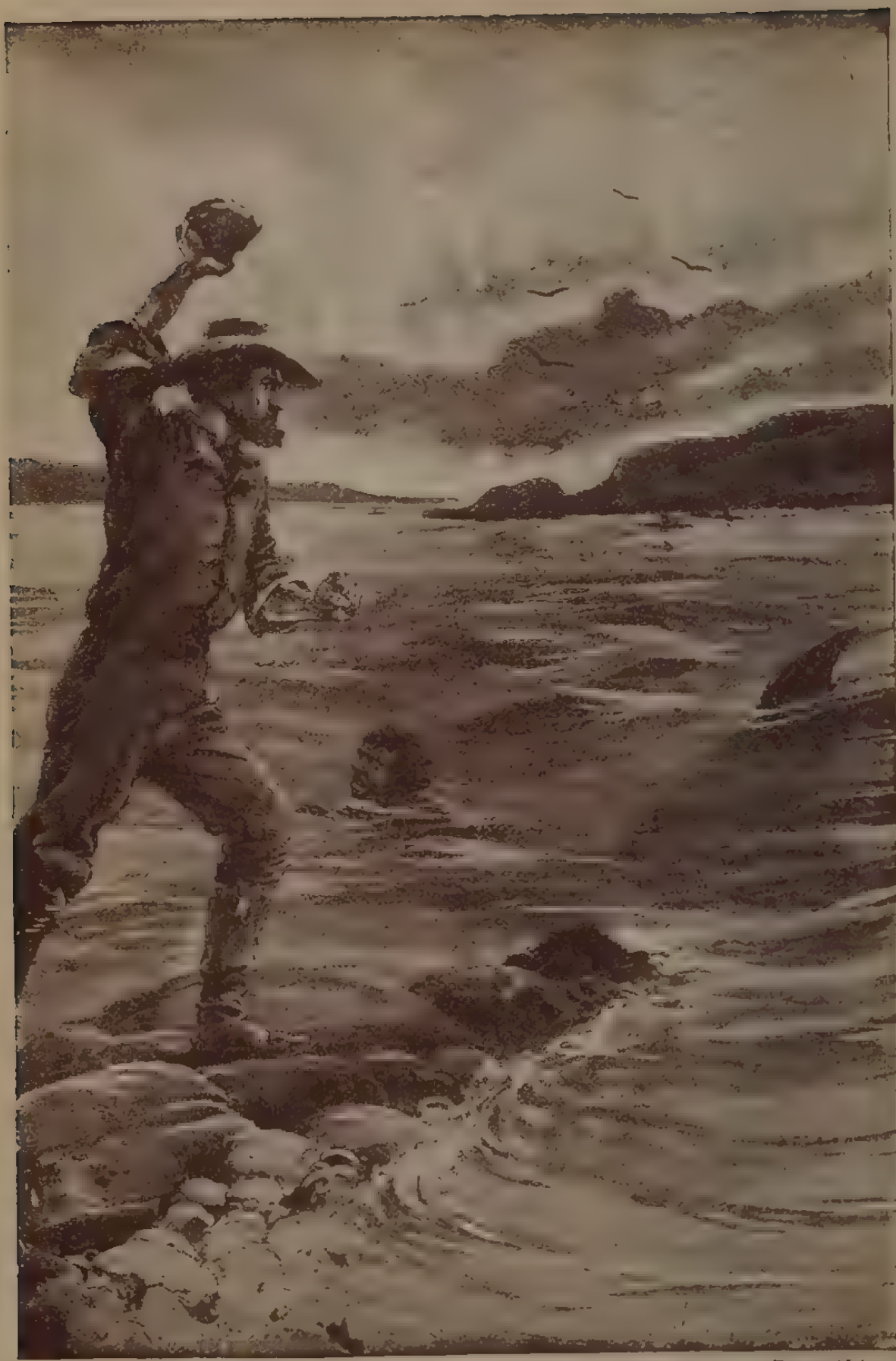
"Is this a day for warldly dealings?" said he. "Hoo div ye think to thrive gien y' offer your mairchandeeze o' the Sabba day!" George coloured up to the eyes. "Ye'll maybe no hae read the paurable o' the money-changers i' the temple, no forgettin' a wheen warldly-minded chields that sell't doos, when they had mair need to be on their knees or hearkening a religious discoorse, or a bit psaum, or the like. Aweel, ye need na hong your heed yon gate neether. Ye had na the privileege of being born in Scoetland, ye ken, or nae doot ye'd hae kenned better, for ye are a decent lad—deed are ye. Aweel, stap ben, lad, and I'se let ye see a drap whisky, the like does na aften gang doon an Englishman's thrapple."

"Whisky? Well, but it seems to me if we didn't ought to deal we didn't ought to drink."

"Hout! tout! it is no forbedden to taste—that's nae sin that ever I heerd't—c' way."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

George heard of a farmer who was selling off his sheep, about fifty miles off, near the coast. George put money in his purse, rose at three, and walked the fifty miles with Carlo that day. The next he chaffered with the farmer, but they did not quite agree. George was vexed, but he knew it would not do to show it; so he strolled away carelessly towards the water. In this place the sea comes several



N.T.L. George held his arm high in the air. *Page* 354.

miles inland, not in one sheet, but in a series of salt-water lakes, very pretty.

George stood and admired the water and the native blacks paddling along in boats of bark no bigger than a cocked hat. These strips of bark are good for carriage and bad for carriage; I mean they are very easily carried on a man's back ashore, but they won't carry a man on the water so well, and sitting in them is like balancing on a straw. These absurd vehicles have come down to these blockheads from their fathers, so they won't burn them and build according to reason. They commonly paddle in companies of three; so then whenever one is purled the other two come on each side of him; each takes a hand, and with amazing skill and delicacy they reseat him in his cocked hat, which never sinks—only purls. Several of these triads passed in the middle of the lake, looking to George like inverted capital "T's." They went a tremendous pace, with occasional stoppages when a purl occurred.

Presently a single savage appeared nearer the land, and George could see his lithe, sinewy form, and the grace and rapidity with which he urged his gossamer bark along. It was like a hawk—half a dozen rapid strokes of his wings and then a smooth glide for ever so far.

"Our savages would sit on the blade of a knife, I do think," was George's observation.

Now as George looked and admired blackee, it unfortunately happened that a mosquito flew into blackee's nostrils, which were much larger and more inviting—to a gnat—than ours. The aboriginal sneezed, and over went the ancestral boat.

The next moment he was seen swimming and pushing his boat before him. He was scarce a hundred yards from the shore when all of a sudden down he went. George was frightened, and took off his coat, and was unlacing his boots, when the black came up again. "Oh, he was only larking," thought George. "But he has left his boat—and why, there he goes down again!" The savage made a dive, and came up ten yards nearer the shore, but he kept his face parallel to it, and he was scarce a moment in sight before he dived again. Then a horrible suspicion flashed across George—"There is something after him!"

This soon became a fearful certainty. Just before he dived next time, a dark object was plainly visible on the water

close behind him. George was wild with fear for poor blackee. He shouted at the monster, he shouted and beckoned to the swimmer; and last, snatching up a stone, he darted up a little bed of rock elevated about a yard above the shore. The next dive the black came up within thirty yards of this very place, but the shark came at him the next moment. He dived again, but before the fish followed him George threw a stone with great precision and force at him. It struck the water close by him, as he turned to follow his prey. George jumped down and got several more stones, and held one foot advanced and his arm high in air. Up came the savage panting for breath. The fish made a dart, George threw a stone; it struck him with such fury on the shoulders that it span off into the air and fell into the sea forty yards off. Down went the man, and the fish after him. The next time they came up, to George's dismay the sea-tiger showed no signs of being hurt, and the man was greatly distressed. The moment he was above water George heard him sob, and saw the whites of his eyes as he rolled them despairingly; and he could not dive again for want of breath. Seeing this, the shark turned on his back, and came at him with his white belly visible and his treble row of teeth glistening in a mouth like a red grave.

Rage as well as fear seized George Fielding, the muscles started on his brawny arm as he held it aloft with a heavy stone in it. The black was so hard pressed the last time, and so dead beat that he could make but a short duck under the fish's back and come out at his tail. The shark did not follow him this time, but, cunning as well as ferocious, slipped a yard or two inshore, and waited to grab him; not seeing him, he gave a slap with his tail-fin, and reared his huge head out of water a moment to look forth; then George Fielding, grinding his teeth with fury, flung his heavy stone with tremendous force at the creature's cruel eye. The heavy stone missed the eye by an inch or two, but it struck the fish on the nose and teeth with a force that would have felled a bullock.

Creesh! went the sea-tiger's flesh and teeth, and the blood squirted in a circle. Down went the shark like a lump of lead, literally felled by the crashing stroke.

"I've hit him! I've hit him!" roared George, seizing another stone. "Come here, quick! quick! before he gets the better of it."

The black swam like a mad thing to George. George splashed into the water up to his knee, and taking blackee under the arm-pits, tore him out of the water, and set him down high and dry.

"Give us your hand over it, old fellow," cried George, panting and trembling. "Oh dear, my heart is in my mouth, it is!"

The black's eye seemed to kindle a little at George's fire, but all the rest of him was as cool as a cucumber. He let George shake his hand, and said quietly, "Thank you, sar! Jacky thank you a good deal!" He added in the same breath, "Suppose you lend me a knife, then we eat a good deal."

George lent him his knife, and to his surprise the savage slipped into the water again. His object was soon revealed; the shark had come up to the surface and was floating motionless. It was with no small trepidation George saw this cool hand swim gently behind him and suddenly disappear; in a moment, however, the water was red all round, and the shark turned round on his belly. Jacky swam behind, and pushed him ashore. It proved to be a young fish about six feet long; but it was as much as the men could do to lift it. The creature's nose was battered, and Jacky showed this to George, and let him know that a blow on that part was deadly to them. "You make him dead for a little while," said he, "so then I make him dead enough to eat;" and he showed where he had driven the knife into him in three places.

Jacky's next proceeding was to get some dry sticks and wood, and prepare a fire, which, to George's astonishment, he lighted thus: he got a block of wood, in the middle of which he made a little hole; then he cut and pointed a long stick, and inserting the point into the block, worked it round between his palms for some time and with increasing rapidity. Presently there came a smell of burning wood, and soon after it burst into a flame at the point of contact. Jacky cut slices of shark and toasted them. "Black fellow stupid fellow—eat 'em raw; but I eat 'em burnt like white man."

He then told George he had often been at Sydney, and could "speak the white man's language a good deal," and must on no account be confounded with common black fellows. He illustrated his civilisation by eating the shark as it cooked: that is to say, as soon as the surface was

brown he gnawed it off, and put the rest down to brown again, and so ate a series of laminæ instead of a steak; that it would be cooked to the centre if he let it alone was a fact this gentleman had never discovered, probably had never had the patience to discover.

George, finding the shark's flesh detestable, declined it, and watched the other. Presently he vented his reflections. "Well, you are a cool one! Half an hour ago I didn't expect to see you eating him—quite the contrary." Jacky grinned good-humouredly in reply.

When George returned to the farmer, the latter, who had begun to fear the loss of a customer, came at once to terms with him. The next day he started for home with three hundred sheep. Jacky announced that he should accompany him, and help him a good deal. George's consent was not given, simply because it was not asked. However, having saved the man's life, he was not sorry to see a little more of him.

It is usual in works of this kind to give minute descriptions of people's dress. I fear I have often violated this rule. However, I will not in this case.

Jacky's dress consisted of, in front, a sort of purse made of rat-skin; behind, a bran-new tomahawk and two spears.

George fancied this costume might be improved upon; he therefore bought from the farmer a second-hand coat and trousers, and his new friend donned them with grinning satisfaction. The farmer's wife pitied George, living by himself out there, and she gave him several little luxuries; a bacon-ham, some tea, and some orange-marmalade, and a little lump-sugar and some potatoes.

He gave the potatoes to Jacky to carry. They weighed but a few pounds; George himself carried about a quarter of a hundred-weight. For all that, the potatoes worried Jacky more than George's burden him. At last he loitered behind so long that George sat down and lighted his pipe. Presently up comes Niger with the sleeves of his coat hanging on each side of his neck and the potatoes in them. My lord had taken his tomahawk and chopped off the sleeves at the arm-pit: then he had sewed up their bottoms and made bags of them, uniting them at the other end by a string which rested on the back of his neck like a milk-maid's balance. Being asked what he had done with the rest of the coat, he told George he had thrown it away because it was a good deal hot.

"But it won't be hot at night, and then you will wish you hadn't been such a fool," said George, irate.

No, he couldn't make Jacky see this; being hot at the time, Jacky could not feel the cold to come. Jacky became a hanger-on of George, and if he did little he cost little; and if a beast strayed, he was invaluable; he could follow the creature for miles by a chain of physical evidence no single link of which a civilised man would have seen.

A quantity of rain having fallen and filled all the pools, George thought he would close with an offer that had been made him, and swap one hundred and fifty sheep for cows and bullocks. He mentioned this intention to M'Laughlan one Sunday evening. M'Laughlan warmly approved his intention. George then went on to name the customer who was disposed to make the exchange in question. At this the worthy M'Laughlan showed some little uneasiness, and told George he might do better than deal with that person.

George said he should be glad to do better, but did not see how.

"Humph!" said M'Laughlan, and fidgeted.

M'Laughlan then invited George to a glass of grog, and while they were sipping he gave an order to his man.

M'Laughlan inquired when the proposed negotiation was likely to take place. "To-morrow morning," said George. "He asked me to go over about it this afternoon, but I remembered the lesson you gave me about making bargains on this day, and I said 'To-morrow, farmer!'"

"Ye're a guid lad," said the Scot demurely; "ye're just as decent a body as ever I forgathered wi'; and I'm thinking it's a sin to let ye gang twal miles for mairchandeeze when ye can hae it a hantle cheaper at your ain door."

"Can I? I don't know what you mean."

"Ye dinna ken what I mean? Maybe no."

Mr. M'Laughlan fell into thought a while, and the grog being finished, he proposed a stroll. He took George out into the yard, and there the first thing they saw was a score and a half of bullocks that had just been driven into a circle, and were maintained there by two men and two dogs.

George's eyes brightened at the sight, and his host watched it. "Aweel," said he, "has Tamson a bonnier lot than yon to gie ye?"

"I don't know," said George drily; "I have not seen his."

"But I hae, and he hasna a lot to even wi' them."

"I shall know to-morrow," said George. But he eyed M'Laughlan's cattle with an expression there was no mistaking.

"Aweel," said the worthy Scot, "ye're a neebor and a decent lad, ye are; sae I'll just speer ye ane question. Noo, mon," continued he in a most mellifluous tone, and pausing at every word, "gien it were Monday, as it is the Sabba day, hoo mony sheep wud ye gie for yon bonnie beasties?"

George finding his friend in this mind, pretended to hang back and to consider himself bound to treat with Thomson first. The result of all which was that M'Laughlan came over to him at daybreak, and George made a very profitable exchange with him.

At the end of six months more George found himself twice as rich in substance as at first starting; but instead of one hundred pounds cash, he had but eighty. Still, if sold up, he would have fetched five hundred pounds. But more than a year was gone since he began on his own account. "Well," said George, "I must be patient and still keep doubling on, and if I do as well next year as last, I shall be worth eight hundred pounds."

A month's dry, hot weather came, and George had arduous work to take water to his bullocks and to drive them in from long distances to his homestead, where by digging enormous tanks he had secured a constant supply. No man ever worked for a master as this rustic Hercules worked for Susan Merton. Prudent George sold twenty bullocks and cows to the first bidder. "I can buy again at a better time," argued he.

He had now one hundred and twenty-five pounds in hand. The drought continued, and he wished he had sold more.

One morning Abner came hastily in and told him that nearly all the beasts and cows were missing. George flung himself on his horse and galloped to the end of his run. No signs of them; returning disconsolate, he took Jacky on his crupper and went over the ground with him. Jacky's eyes were playing and sparkling all the time in search of signs. Nothing clear was discovered. Then at Jacky's request they rode off George's feeding-ground altogether, and made for a little wood about two miles distant.

"Suppose you stop here; I go in the bush," said Jacky.

George sat down and waited. In about two hours Jacky came back. "I've found 'em," said Jacky coolly.

George rose in great excitement and followed Jacky through the stiff bush, often scratching his hands and face. At last Jacky stopped and pointed to the ground—"There!"

"There! ye foolish creature," cried George; "that's ashes where somebody has lighted a fire; that and a bone or two is all I see."

"Beef-bone," replied Jacky coolly. George started with horror. "Black fellow burn beef here and eat him. Black fellow a great thief. Black fellow take all your beef. Now we catch black fellow and shoot him suppose he not tell us where the other beef gone."

"But how am I to catch him? How am I even to find him?"

"You wait till the sun so; then black fellow burn more beef. Then I see the smoke; then I catch him. You go fetch the make-thunder with two mouths. When he see him that make him honest a good deal."

Off galloped George, and returned with his double-barrelled gun in about an hour and a half. He found Jacky where he had left him, at the foot of a gum-tree tall and smooth as an admiral's mainmast. Jacky, who was coiled up in happy repose like a dog in warm weather, rose, and with a slight yawn said, "Now I go up and look."

He made two sharp cuts on the tree with his tomahawk, and putting his great toe in the nick, rose on it, made another nick higher up, and holding the smooth stem, put his other great toe in it, and so on till in an incredibly short time he had reached the top and left a staircase of his own making behind him. He had hardly reached the top when he slid down to the bottom again and announced that he had discovered what they were in search of.

George haltered the pony to the tree and followed Jacky, who struck farther into the wood. After a most disagreeable scramble, at the other side of the wood Jacky stopped and put his finger to his lips. They both went cautiously out of the wood, and mounting a bank that lay under its shelter, they came plump upon a little party of blacks, four male and three female. The women were seated round a fire, burning beef and gnawing the outside laminæ, then putting it down to the fire again. The men, who always

serve themselves first, were lying gorged, but at sight of George and Jacky they were on their feet in a moment and their spears poised in their hands.

Jacky walked down the bank and poured a volley of abuse into them. Between two of his native sentences he uttered a quiet aside to George, "Suppose black fellow lift spear, you shoot him dead," and then abused them like pickpockets again, and pointed to the make-thunder with two mouths in George's hand.

After a severe cackle on both sides, the voices began to calm down like water going off the boil, and presently soft, low gutturals passed in pleasant modulation. Then the eldest male savage made a courteous signal to Jacky that he should sit down and gnaw. Jacky on this administered three kicks among the gins* and sent them flying, then down he sat and had a gnaw at their beef—George's beef, I mean. The rage of hunger appeased, he rose, and with the male savages took the open country. On the way he let George know that these black fellows were of his tribe, and that they had driven off the cattle, and that he had insisted on restitution, which was about to be made; and sure enough, before they had gone a mile they saw some beasts grazing in a narrow valley. George gave a shout of joy, but counting them, he found fifteen short. When Jacky inquired after the others the blacks shrugged their shoulders. They knew nothing more than this: that, wanting a dinner, they had driven off forty bullocks; but finding they could only eat one that day, they had killed one and left the others, of whom some were in the place they had left them; the rest were somewhere, they didn't know where—far less care. They had dined; that was enough for them.

When this characteristic answer reached George he clenched his teeth, and for a moment felt an impulse to make a little thunder on their slippery black carcasses, but he groaned instead, and said, "They were never taught any better."

Then Jacky and he set to work to drive the cattle together. With infinite difficulty they got them all home by about eleven o'clock at night. The next day up with the sun to find the rest. Two o'clock, and only one had they fallen in with, and the sun broiled so that lazy Jacky gave in and crept in under the beast for shade, and

*γυναι.

George was fain to sit on his shady side, with moody brow and sorrowful heart.

Presently Jacky got up. "I find one," said he.

"Where? where?" cried George, looking all round. Jacky pointed to a rising ground at least six miles off.

George groaned. "Are you making a fool of me? I can see nothing but a barren hill with a few great bushes here and there. You are never taking those bushes for beasts?"

Jacky smiled with utter scorn. "White fellow stupid fellow; he see nothing."

"Well, and what does black fellow see?" snapped George.

"Black fellow see a crow coming from the sun, and when he came over there he turned and went down and not get up again a good while. Then black fellow say, 'I tink.' Presently come flying one more crow from that other side where the sun is not. Black fellow watch him, and when he come over there he turn round and go down too and not get up a good while. Then black fellow say, 'I know.'"

"Oh, come along!" cried George.

They hurried on; but when they came to the rising ground and bushes, Jacky put his finger to his lips. "Suppose we catch the black fellows that have got wings; you make thunder for them?"

He read the answer in George's eye. Then he took George round the back of the hill, and they mounted the crest from the reverse side. They came over it, and there at their very feet lay one of George's best bullocks, with tongue protruded, breathing his last gasp. A crow of the country was perched on his ribs, digging his thick beak into a hole he had made there, and another was picking out one of his eyes. The birds rose, heavily clogged and swelling with gore. George's eyes flashed, his gun went up to his shoulder, and Jacky saw the brown barrel rise slowly for a moment as it followed the nearest bird wobbling off with broad back invitingly displayed to the marksman. Bang! the whole charge shivered the ill-omened glutton, who instantly dropped, riddled with shot like a sieve, while a cloud of dusky feathers rose from him into the air. The other, hearing the earthly thunder and Jacky's exulting whoop, gave a sudden whirl with his long wing and shot up into the

air at an angle, and made off with great velocity; but the second barrel followed him as he turned, and followed him as he flew down the wind. Bang! out flew two handfuls of dusky feathers, and glutton No. 2 died in the air, and its carcass and expanded wings went whirling like a sheet of paper and fell on the top of a bush at the foot of the hill.

All this delighted the devil-may-care Jacky, but it may be supposed it was small consolation to George. He went up to the poor beast, who died even as he looked down on him.

"Drought, Jacky! drought!" said he; "it is Moses, the best of the herd. Oh, Moses, why couldn't you stay beside me? I'm sure I never let you want for water, and never would—you left me to find worse friends!" and so the poor simple fellow moaned over the unfortunate creature, and gently reproached him for his want of confidence in him, that it was pitiful. Then, suddenly turning on Jacky, he said gravely, "Moses won't be the only one, I doubt."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a loud "moo" proclaimed the vicinity of cattle. They ran towards the sound, and in a rocky hollow they found nine bullocks, and alas! at some little distance another lay dead. Those that were alive were panting with lolling tongues in the broiling sun. How to save them; how to get them home a distance of eight miles? "Oh for a drop of water!" The poor fools had strayed into the most arid region for miles round.

Instinct makes blunders as well as reason. *Bestiale est errare.*

"We must drive them from this, Jacky, though half of them die by the way."

The languid brutes made no active resistance. Being goaded and beaten, they got on their legs and moved feebly away.

Three miles the men drove them, and then one who had been already staggering more than the rest gave in and lay down, and no power could get him up again. Jacky advised to leave him. George made a few steps onward with the other cattle, but then he stopped and came back to the sufferer and sat down beside him disconsolate.

"I can't bear to desert a poor dumb creature. He can't speak, Jacky, but look at his poor frightened eye; it seems to say, 'Have you got the heart to go on and leave

me to die for the want of a drop of water?' Oh, Jacky, you that is so clever in reading the signs of Nature, have pity on the poor thing, and do pray try and find us a drop of water. I'd run five miles and fetch it in my hat if you would but find it. Do help us, Jacky;" and the white man looked helplessly up to the black savage, who had learned to read the small type of Nature's book, and he had not.

Jacky hung his head. "White fellow's eyes always shut; black fellow's always open. We pass here before, and Jacky look for water—look for everything. No water here. But," said he languidly, "Jacky will go up high tree and look a good deal."

Selecting the highest tree near, he chopped a staircase, and went up it almost as quickly as a bricklayer mounts a ladder with a hod. At the top he crossed his thighs over the stem, and there he sat full half an hour; his glittering eye reading the confused page, and his subtle mind picking out the minutest syllables of meaning. Several times he shook his head. At last all of a sudden he gave a little start, and then a chuckle, and the next moment he was on the ground.

"What is it?"

"Black fellow stupid fellow—look too far off," and he laughed again for all the world like a jackdaw.

"What is it?"

"A little water, not much."

"Where is it? Where is it? Why don't you tell me where it is?"

"Come," was the answer.

Not forty yards from where they stood Jacky stopped, and thrusting his hand into a tuft of long grass, pulled out a short blue flower with a very thick stem. "Saw him spark from the top of the tree," said Jacky, with a grin. "This fellow stand with him head in the air but him foot in the water. Suppose no water, he die a good deal quick." Then taking George's hand, he made him press the grass hard, and George felt moisture ooze through the herb.

"Yes, my hand is wet; but, Jacky, this drop won't save a beast's life without it is a frog's."

Jacky smiled and rose. "Where that wet came from more stay behind."

He pointed to other patches of grass close by, and following them, showed George that they got larger and larger

in a certain direction. At last he came to a hidden nook, where was a great patch of grass quite a different colour, green as an emerald. "Water," cried Jacky, "a good deal of water."

He took a jump, and came down flat on his back on the grass, and sure enough, though not a drop of surface water was visible, the cool liquid squirted up in a shower round Jacky.

Nature is extremely fond of producing the same things in very different sizes. Here was a miniature copy of those large Australian lakes which show nothing to the eye, but rank grass. You ride upon them a little way, merely wetting your horse's feet, but after a while the sponge gets fuller and fuller, and the grass shows symptoms of giving way, and letting you down to "bottomless perdition."

They squeezed out of this grass sponge a calabash full of water, and George ran with it to the panting beast. Oh, how he sucked it up, and his wild eye calmed, and the liquid life ran through all his frame!

It was hardly in his stomach, before he got up of his own accord, and gave a most sonorous "moo," intended no doubt to express the sentiment of "Never say die."

George drove them all to the grassy sponge, and kept them there till sunset. He was three hours squeezing out water and giving it them before they were satisfied. Then in the cool of the evening he drove them safe home.

The next day one more of his strayed cattle found his way home. The rest he never saw again. This was his first dead loss of any importance; unfortunately it was not the last.

The brutes were demoralised by their excursion, and being active as deer, they would jump over anything and stray. Sometimes the vagrant was recovered—often he was found dead; and sometimes he went twenty miles and mingled with the huge herds of some Crœsus, and was absorbed like a drop of water and lost to George Fielding. This was a bitter blow. This was not the way to make the thousand pounds.

"Better sell them all to the first comer, and then I shall see the end of my loss. I am not one of your lucky ones. I must not venture."

A settler passed George's way driving a large herd of sheep and ten cows. George gave him a dinner and looked over his stock. "You have but few beasts for so many sheep," said he.

The other assented.

"I could part with a few of mine to you if you were so minded."

The other said he should be very glad, but he had no money to spare. Would George take sheep in exchange?

"Well," drawled George, "I would rather it had been cash, but such as you and I must not make the road hard to one another. Sheep I'll take, but full value."

The other was delighted, and nearly all George's bullocks became his for one hundred and fifty sheep.

George was proud of his bargain, and said, "That is a good thing for you and me, Susan, please God."

Now the next morning Abner came in and said to George, "I don't like some of your new lot—the last that are marked with a red *V*."

"Why, what is wrong about them?"

"Come and see."

He found more than one of the new sheep rubbing themselves angrily against the pen, and sometimes among one another.

"Oh dear!" said George; "I have prayed against this on my knees every night of my life, and it is come upon me at last. Sharpen your knife, Abner."

"What! must they all——"

"All the new lot. Call Jacky; he will help you; he likes to see blood. I can't abide it. One hundred and fifty sheep, eighteen-pennorth of wool, and eighteen-pennorth of fat when we fling 'em into the pot—that is all that is left to me of yesterday's deal."

Jacky was called. "Now, Jacky," said George, "these sheep have got the scab of the country; if they get to my flock and taint it, I am a beggar from that moment. These sheep are sure to die, so Abner and you are to kill them. He will show you how. I can't look on and see their blood and my means spilled like water.—Susan, this is a black day for us!"

He went away and sat down upon a stone a good way off, and turned his back upon his house and his little homestead. This was not the way to make the thousand pounds.

The next day the dead sheep were skinned and their bodies chopped up and flung into the copper. The grease was skimmed as it rose, and set aside, and when cool was put into rough barrels with some salt, and kept up until such time as a merchant should pass that way and buy it.

"Well," said George with a sigh, "I know my loss. But if the red scab had got into the large herd, there would have been no end to the mischief."

Soon after this a small feeder at some distance offered to change with M'Laughlan. That worthy liked his own ground best, but willing to do his friend George a good turn, we turned the man over to him. George examined the new place, found that it was smaller, but richer and better watered, and very wisely closed with the proposal.

When he told Jacky, the worthy's eyes sparkled. "Black fellow likes another place. Not every day the same."

And in fact he let out that if this change had not occurred, his intention had been to go a-hunting for a month or two, so weary had he become of always the same place.

The new ground was excellent, and George's hopes, lately clouded, brightened again. He set to work, and made huge tanks to catch the next rain, and as heretofore did the work of two.

It was a sad thing to have to write to Susan and tell her that after twenty months' hard work he was just where he had been at first starting.

One day as George was eating his homely dinner on his knee by the side of his principal flock, he suddenly heard a tremendous scrimmage, mixed with loud, abusive epithets from Abner. He started up, and there was Carlo pitching into a sheep who was trying to jam herself into the crowd to escape him. Up runs one of the sheep-dogs growling, but instead of seizing Carlo, as George thought he would, what does he do but fall upon another sheep, and, spite of all their evasions, the two dogs drove the two sheep out of the flock and sent them pelting down the hill. In one moment George was alongside Abner. "Abner," said he, "how came you to let strange sheep in among mine?"

"Never saw them till the dog pinned them."

"You never saw them!" said George reproachfully. "No, nor your dog either till my Carlo opened your eyes.

A pretty thing for a shepherd and his dog to be taught by a pointer. Well," said George, "you had eyes enough to see whose sheep they were. Tell me that, if you please?"

Abner looked down.

"Why, Abner?"

"I'd as lief bite off my tongue as tell you."

George looked uneasy and his face fell.

"A '*V.*' Don't ye take on?" said Abner. "They couldn't have been ten minutes among ours, and there were but two. And don't you blow me up, for such a thing might happen to the carefullest shepherd that ever was."

"I won't blow ye up, Will Abner," said George. "It is my luck, not yours, that has done this. It was always so. From a game of cricket upwards, I never had my neighbour's luck. If the flock are not tainted I'll give you five pounds, and my purse is not so deep as some; if they are, take your knife and drive it into my heart; I'll forgive you that, as I do this. Carlo! let me look at you. See here, he is all over some stinking ointment; it is off those sheep. I knew it. 'Twasn't likely a pointer dog would be down on strange sheep, like a shepherd's dog, by the sight. 'Twas this stuff offended him. Heaven's will be done!"

"Let us hope the best and not meet trouble half-way."

"Yes," said George feebly, "let us hope the best."

"Don't I hear that Thompson has an ointment that cures the red scab?"

"So they say."

George whistled to his pony. The pony came to him. George did not treat him as we are apt to treat a horse, like a riding machine. He used to speak to him and caress him when he fed him and when he made his bed, and the horse followed him about like a dog.

In half an hour's sharp riding they were at Thompson's, an invaluable man that sold and bought animals, doctored animals, and kept a huge boiler in which bullocks were reduced to a few pounds of grease in a very few hours.

"You have an ointment that is good for the scab, sir?"

"That I have, farmer. Sold some to a neighbour of yours day before yesterday."

"Who was that?"

"A new-comer. Vesey is his name."

George groaned. "How do you use it, if you please?"

"Shear 'em close, rub the ointment well in, wash 'em every two days, and rub in again."

"Give me a stone of it."

"A stone of my ointment! Well, you are the wisest man I have come across this year or two. You shall have it, sir."

George rode home with his purchase.

Abner turned up his nose at it, and was inclined to laugh at George's fears. But George said to himself, "I have Susan to think of as well as myself. Besides," said he a little bitterly, "I haven't a grain of luck. If I am to do any good, I must be twice as prudent and thrice as industrious as my neighbours, or I shall fall behind them.—Now, Abner, we'll shear 'em close."

"Shear them! Why, it is not two months since they were all sheared."

"And then we will rub a little of this ointment into them."

"What, before we see any sign of the scab among them? I wouldn't do that if they were mine."

"No more would I, if they were yours," replied George almost fiercely. "But they are not yours, Will Abner. They are unlucky George's."

During the next three days four hundred sheep were clipped and anointed. Jacky helped clip, but he would not wear gloves, and George would not let him handle the ointment without them, suspecting mercury.

At last George yielded to Abner's remonstrances, and left off shearing and anointing.

Abner altered his opinion when one day he found a sheep rubbing like mad against a tree, and before noon half a dozen at the same game. Those two wretched sheep had tainted the flock.

Abner hung his head when he came to George with this ill-omened news. He expected a storm of reproaches. But George was too deeply distressed for any petulances of anger. "It is my fault," said he; "I was the master, and I let my servant direct me. My own heart told me what to do, yet I must listen to a fool and a hireling that cared not for the sheep. How should he? they weren't his, they were mine to lose and mine to save. I had my choice; I took it, I lost them. Call Jacky, and let's to work and save here and there one, if so be God shall be kinder to them than I have been."

From that hour there was but little rest, morning, noon, or night; it was nothing but an endless routine of anointing and washing, washing and anointing sheep. To the credit of Mr. Thompson it must be told, that of the four hundred who had been taken in time no single sheep died; but of the others a good many. There are incompetent shepherds as well as incompetent statesmen and doctors, though not so many. Abner was one of these. An acute Australian shepherd would have seen the more subtle signs of this terrible disease a day or two before the patient sheep began to rub themselves with fury against the trees and against each other; but Abner did not; and George did not profess to have a minute knowledge of the animal, or why pay a shepherd? When this herculean labour and battle had gone on for about a week, Abner came to George, and with a hang-dog look begged him to look out for another shepherd.

"Why, Will, surely you won't think to leave me in this strait? Why, three of us are hardly able for the work, and how can I make head against this plague with only the poor sav—with only Jacky, that is first-rate at light work till he gets to find it dull, but can't lift a sheep and fling her into the water, as the like of us can?"

"Well, ye see," said Abner doggedly, "I have got the offer of a place with Mr. Meredith, and he won't wait for me more than a week."

"He is a rich man, Will, and I am a poor one," said George in a faint, expostulating tone. Abner said nothing, but his face showed he had already considered this fact from his own point of view.

"He could spare you better than I can; but you are right to leave a falling house that you have helped to pull down."

"I don't want to go all in a moment: I can stay a week till you get another."

"A week! how can I get a shepherd in this wilderness at a week's notice? You talk like a fool."

"Well, I can't stay any longer. You know there is no agreement at all between us, but I'll stay a week to oblige you."

"You'll oblige me, will you?" said George, with a burst of indignation; "then oblige me by packing up your traps and taking your ugly face out of my sight before dinner-time this day. Stay, my man, here are your wages up

to twelve o'clock to-day; take 'em and out of my sight, you dirty rascal. Let me meet misfortune with none but friends by my side. Away with you, or I shall forget myself, and dirty my hands with your mean carcass."

The hireling slunk off, and as he slunk, George stormed and thundered after him, "And wherever you go may sorrow and sickness—— No!"

George turned to Jacky, who sat coolly by, his eyes sparkling at the prospect of a row. "Jacky!" said he, and then he seemed to choke, and could not say another word.

"Suppose I get the make-thunder, then you shoot him."

"Shoot him! what for?"

"Too much bungality,* shoot him dead. He let the sheep come that have my two fingers so on their backs" (here Jacky made a V with his middle and forefinger), "so he killed the other sheep—yet still you not shoot him—that so stupid I call."

"Oh, Jacky, hush! don't you know me better than to think I would kill a man for killing my sheep? Oh fie! oh fie! No, Jacky, Heaven forbid I should do the man any harm; but when I think of what he has brought on my head, and then to skulk and leave me in my sore strait and trouble, me that never gave him ill language, as most masters would; and then, Jacky, do you remember when he was sick how kind you and I were to him—and now to leave us. There, I must go into the house, and you come and call me out when that man is off the premises—not before."

At twelve o'clock selfish Abner started to walk to Mr. Meredith's, a distance of thirty miles. Smarting under the sense of his contemptibleness and of the injury he was doing his kind, poor master, he shook his fist at the house, and told Jacky he hoped the scab would rot the flock, and, that done, fall upon the bipeds, on his own black hide in particular. Jacky only answered with his eye. When the man was gone he called George.

George's anger had soon died. Jacky found him reading a little book in search of comfort, and when they were out in the air Jacky saw that his eyes were rather red.

"Why you cry?" said Jacky. "I very angry because you cry."

"It is very foolish of me," said George apologetically,

* Stupidity.

"but three is a small company, and we in such trouble; I thought I had made a friend of him. Often I saw he was not worth his wages, but out of pity I wouldn't part with him when I could better have spared him than he me, and now—there—no more about it. Work is best for a sore heart, and mine is sore and heavy too this day."

Jacky put his finger to his head, and looked wise. "First you listen me—this one time I speak a good many words. Dat stupid fellow know nothing, and so because you not shoot him a good way* behind, you very stupid. One," counted Jacky, touching his thumb, "he know nothing with these (pointing to his eyes). Jacky know possum,† Jacky know kangaroo, know turkey, know snake, know a good many, some with legs like dis (four fingers), some with legs like dis (two fingers)—dat stupid fellow know nothing but sheep, and not know sheep, let him die too much. Know nothing with 'um eyes. One more (touching his fore-finger). Know nothing with dis (touching his tongue). Jacky speak him good words, he speak Jacky bad words. Dat so stupid—he know nothing with dis. One more. You do him good things—he do you bad things; he know nothing with these (indicating his arms and legs as the seat of moral action), so den because you not shoot him long ago now you cry; den because you cry, Jacky angry. Yes, Jacky very good. Jacky a little good before he live with you. Since den very good; but when dat fellow know nothing, and now you cry at the bottom‡ part, Jacky a little angry, and Jacky go hunting a little not much direckly."

With these words the savage caught up his tomahawk and two spears, and was going across country without another word; but George cried out in dismay, "Oh, stop a moment! What, to-day, Jacky? Jacky, Jacky, now don't ye go to-day. I know it is very dull for the likes of you, and you will soon leave me, but don't ye go to-day; don't set me against flesh and blood altogether"

"I come back when the sun there," pointing to the east, "but must hunt a little, not much. Jacky uncomfortable," continued he, jumping at a word, which from its size he thought must be of weight in any argument, "a good deal uncomfortable suppose I not hunt a little dis day."

"I say no more; I have no right—good-bye! Take my hand; I shall never see you any more."

* Long ago. † Opossum. ‡ At last.

"I shall come back when the sun there."

"Ah! well, I daresay you think you will. Good-bye, Jacky; don't you stay to please me."

Jacky glided away across country. He looked back once and saw George watching him. George was sitting sorrowful upon a stone, and as this last bit of humanity fell away from him and melted away in the distance, his heart died within him. "He thinks he will come back to me, but when he gets in the open and finds the track of animals to hunt, he will follow them wherever they go, and his poor shallow head won't remember this place nor me; I shall never see poor Jacky any more!"

The black continued his course for about four miles, until a deep hollow hid him from George. Arrived here, he instantly took a line nearly opposite to his first, and when he had gone about three miles on this tack, he began to examine the ground attentively and to run about like a hound. After near half an hour of this he fell upon some tracks, and followed them at an easy trot across the country for miles and miles, his eye keenly bent upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Our story has to follow a little way an infinitesimal personage.

Abner, the ungratefullish one, with a bundle tied up in a handkerchief, strode stoutly away towards Mr. Meredith's grazing ground. "I am well out of that place," was his reflection. As he had been only once over the ground before, he did not venture to relax his pace, lest night should overtake him in a strange part. He stepped out so well, that just before the sun set he reached the head of a broad valley that was all Meredith's; about three miles off glittered a white mansion set in a sea of pasture studded with cattle instead of sails. "Ay! ay!" thought the ungratefullish one, "no fear of the scab breaking up this master—I'm all right now." As he chuckled over his prospects, a dusky figure stole noiselessly from a little thicket—an arm was raised behind him—crosssh! a hard weapon came down on his skull, and he lay on his face with the blood trickling from his mouth and ears.

CHAPTER XL.

He who a few months ago was so light-hearted and bright with hope, now rose at daybreak for a work of herculean toil as usual, but no longer with the spirit that makes labour light. The same strength, the same dogged perseverance were there, but the sense of lost money, lost time, and invincible ill-luck oppressed him; then, too, he was alone—everything had deserted him but misfortune.

"I have left my Susan and I have lost her—left the only friend I had or ever shall have in this hard world" This was his constant thought, as doggedly but hopelessly he struggled against the pestilence. Single-handed and leaden-hearted, he had to catch a sheep, to fling her down, to hold her down, to rub the ointment into her, and to catch another that had been rubbed yesterday and take her to the pool and fling her in and keep her in till every part of her skin was soaked.

Four hours of this drudgery had George gone through single-handed and leaden-hearted, when, as he knelt over a kicking, struggling sheep, he became conscious of something gliding between him and the sun; he looked up, and there was Jacky, grinning.

George uttered an exclamation: "What, come back! Well now, that is very good of you, I call. How do you do?" and he gave him a great shake of the hand.

"Jacky very well; Jacky not at all uncomfortable after him hunt a little."

"Then I am very glad you have had a day's sport, leastways a night's, I call it, since it has made you comfortable, Jacky."

"Oh yes, very comfortable now," and his white teeth and bright eye proclaimed the relief and satisfaction his little trip had afforded his nature.

"There, Jacky, if the ointment is worth the trouble it gives me rubbing of it in, that sheep won't ever catch the scab, I do think. Well, Jacky, seems to me I ought to ask your pardon—I did you wrong. I never expected you would leave the kangaroos and opossums for me once you were off. But I suppose, fact is you haven't quite forgotten Twofold Bay."

"Two fool bay?" inquired Jacky, puzzled.

"Where I first fell in with you. You made one in a hunt that day, only instead of hunting you was hunted, and pretty close too, and if I hadn't been a good cricketer and learned to fling true——Why, I do declare I think he has forgotten the whole thing, shark and all!"

At the word shark, a gleam of intelligence came to the black's eye; it was succeeded by a look of wonder. "Shark come to eat me—you throw stone—so we eat him. I see him now a little—a very little—dat a long way off—a very long way off. Jacky can hardly see him when he try a good deal. White fellow see a long way off behind him back—dat is very curious."

George coloured. "You are right, lad—it was a long while ago, and I am vexed for mentioning it. Well, anyway you *are* come back, and you are welcome. Now you shall do a little of the light work, but I'll do all the heavy work, because I'm used to it;" and, indeed, poor George did work and slave like Hercules. Forty times that day he carried a full-sized sheep in his hands a distance of twenty yards, and flung her into the water, and splashed in and rubbed her back in the water.

The fourth day after Jacky's return George asked him to go all over the ground and tell him how many sheep he saw give signs of the fatal disorder.

About four o'clock in the afternoon Jacky returned, driving before him with his spear a single sheep. The agility of both the biped and quadruped was droll; the latter every now and then making a rapid bolt to get back to the pasture, and Jacky bounding like a buck and pricking her with a spear.

For the first time he found George doing nothing. "Dis one scratch 'um back—only dis one."

"Then we have driven out the murrain, and the rest will live. A hard fight, Jacky—a hard fight! but we have won it at last. We will rub this one well; help me put her down, for my head aches." After rubbing her a little George said, "Jacky, I wish you would do it for me, for my head do ache so I can't abide to hold it down and work too."

After dinner they sat and looked at the sheep feeding. "No more dis," said Jacky gaily, imitating a sheep rubbing against a tree.

"No, I have won the day; but I haven't won it cheap. Jacky, that fellow Abner was a bad man—an ungrateful man."

These words George spoke with a very singular tone of gravity.

"Never you mind you about him."

"No! I must try to forgive him; we are all great sinners. Is it cold to-day?"

"No, it is a good deal hot!"

"I thought it must, for the wind is in a kindly quarter. Well, Jacky, I am as cold as ice."

"Dat very curious."

"And my head do ache so, I can hardly bear myself."

"You ill a little—soon be well."

"I doubt I shall be worse before I am better."

"Never you mind you. I go and bring something I know. We make it hot with water, den you drink it; and after dat you a good deal better."

"Do, Jacky. I won't take doctor's stuff. It is dug out of the ground, and never was intended for man's inside. But you get me something that grows in sight and I'll take that; and don't be long, Jacky, for I am not well."

Jacky returned towards evening with a bundle of simples. He found George shivering over a fire. He got the pot and began to prepare an infusion. "Now, you soon better," said he.

"I hope so, Jacky," said George very gravely, "thank you all the same. Jacky, I haven't been not to say dry for the last ten days with me washing the sheep, and I have caught a terrible chill—a chill like death; and, Jacky, I have tried too much—I have abused my strength. I am a very strong man as men go, and so was my father; but he abused his strength—and he was took just as I am took now, and in a week he was dead. I have worked hard ever since I came here, but since Abner left me at the pinch it hasn't been man's work, Jacky; it has been a wrestling match from dawn to dark. No man could go on so and not break down; but I wanted so to save the poor sheep. Well, the sheep are saved; but——"

When Jacky's infusion was ready, he made George take it and then lie down. Unfortunately, the attack was too violent to yield to this simple remedy. Fever was upon George Fielding—fever in his giant shape; not as he creeps over the weak, but as he rushes on the strong. George had never a headache in his life before. Fever found him full of blood, and turned it all to fire. He tossed—he raged—and forty-eight hours after his first seizure

the strong man lay weak as a child, except during those paroxysms of delirium which robbed him of his reason while they lasted, and of his strength when they retired.

On the fourth day, after a raging paroxysm, he became suddenly calm, and looking up, saw Jacky seated at some little distance, his bright eye fixed upon him.

"You better now?" inquired he with even more than his usual gentleness of tone. "You not talk stupid things any more?"

"What, Jacky, are you watching me?" said the sick man. "Now I call that very kind of you. Jacky, I am not the man I was—we are cut down in a day like the ripe grass. How long is it since I was took ill?"

"One, one, one, and one more day."

"Ay! ay! My father lasted till the fifth day, and then ——Jacky!"

"Here Jacky! what you want?"

"Go out on the hill and see whether any of the sheep are rubbing themselves."

Jacky went out and soon returned. "Not see one rub himself."

A faint gleam lighted George's sunken eye. "That is a comfort. I hope I shall be accepted not to have been a bad shepherd, for I may say, 'I have given my life for my sheep.' Poor things!"

George dozed. Towards evening he awoke, and there was Jacky just where he had seen him last. "I didn't think you had cared so much for me, Jacky, my boy."

"Yes, care very much for you. See, 'um make beef-water for you a good deal."

And sure enough he had boiled down about forty pounds of beef and filled a huge calabash with the extract, which he set by George's side.

"And why are you so fond of me, Jacky? It isn't on account of my saving your life, for you had forgotten that. What makes you such a friend to me?"

"I tell you. Often I go to tell you before, but many words dat a good deal trouble. One—when you make thunder the bird always die. One—you take a sheep so and hold him up high. 'Um never see one more white fellow able to do dat. One—you make a stone go and hit things other white fellow never hit. One—little horse come to you: other white fellow go to horse—horse run away. Little horse run to you, dat because you so good. One—Carlo

fond of you. All day now he come in and go out, and say so (imitating a dog's whimper). He so uncomfortable because you lie down so. One—when you speak to Jacky, you not speak big like white fellow, you speak small and like a fiddle—dat please Jacky's ear. One—when you look at Jacky always, your face make like a hot day when dere no rain—dat please Jacky's eye; and so when Jacky see you stand up one day a good deal high, and now lie down, dat makes him uncomfortable; and when he see you red one day and white dis day, dat make him uncomfortable a good deal; and when he see you so beautiful one day and dis day so ugly, dat make him so uncomfortable, he afraid you go away and speak no more good words to Jacky, and dat make Jacky feel a thing inside here (touching his breast), no more can breathe—and want to do like the gin, but don't know how. Oh dear! don't know how!"

"Poor Jacky! I do wish I had been kinder to you than I have. Oh, I am very short of wind, and my back is very bad!"

"When black fellow bad in 'um back he always die," said Jacky very gravely.

"Ay," said George quietly. "Jacky, will you do one or two little things for me now?"

"Yes, do 'um all."

"Give me that little book that I may read it. Thank you. Jacky, this is the book of my religion, and it was given to me by one I love better than all the world. I have disobeyed her—I have thought too little of what is in this book, and too much of this world's gain. God forgive me! and I think He will, because it was for Susan's sake I was so greedy of gain."

Jacky looked on awe-struck as George read the book of his religion.

"Open the door, Jacky."

Jacky opened the door; then coming to George's side, he said with an anxious, inquiring look and trembling voice, "Are you going to leave me, George?"

"Yes, Jacky, my boy," said George, "I doubt I am going to leave you. So now thank you and bless you for all kindness. Put your face close down to mine—there—I don't care for your black skin—He who made mine made yours; and I feel we are brothers, and you have been one to me. Good-bye, dear, and don't stay here. You can do nothing more for your poor friend George."

Jacky gave a little moan. "Yes, 'um can do a little more before he go and hide him face where there are a good deal of trees."

Then Jacky went almost on tiptoe, and fetched another calabash full of water and placed it by George's head. Then he went very softly and fetched a heavy iron which he had seen George use in penning sheep, and laid it by George's side; next he went softly and brought George's gun, and laid it gently by George's side down on the ground.

This done, he turned to take his last look of the sick man, now feebly dozing, the little book in his drooping hand. But as he gazed, Nature rushed over the poor savage's heart and took it quite by surprise: even while bending over his white brother to look his last farewell, with a sudden start he turned his back on him, and sinking on his hams, he burst out crying and sobbing with a wild and terrible violence.

CHAPTER XLI.

For near an hour Jacky sat upon the ground, his face averted from his sick friend, and cried: then suddenly he rose, and, without looking at him, went out at the door, and turning his face towards the great forests that lay forty miles distant eastward, he ran all the night, and long before dawn was hid in the pathless woods.

A white man feels that grief, when not selfish, is honourable, and unconsciously he nurses such grief more or less; but to simple-minded Jacky grief was merely a subtle pain, and to be got rid of as quickly as possible, like any other pain.

He ran to the vast and distant woods, hoping to leave George's death a long way behind him, and so not see what caused his pain so plain as he saw it just now. It is to be observed that he looked upon George as dead. The taking into his hand of the book of his religion, the kind embrace, the request that the door might be opened—doubtless for the disembodied spirit to pass out—all these rites were understood by Jacky to imply that the last scene was at hand. Why witness it? it would make him still more uncomfortable. Therefore he ran, and never once

looked back, and plunged into the impenetrable gloom of the eastern forests.

The white man had left Fielding to get a richer master. The half-reasoning savage left him to cure his own grief at losing him. There he lay, abandoned in trouble and sickness by all his kind. But one friend never stirred—a single-hearted, single-minded, non-reasoning friend.

Who was this pure-minded friend?—A dog.

Carlo loved George. They had lived together, they had sported together, they had slept together side by side on the cold, hard deck of the *Phœnix,* and often they had kept each other warm, sitting crouched together behind a little bank or a fallen tree, with the wind whistling and the rain shooting by their ears.

When day after day George came not out of the house, Carlo was very uneasy. He used to patter in and out all day, and whimper pitifully, and often he sat in the room where George lay, and looked towards him and whined. But now when his master was left quite alone, his distress and anxiety redoubled; he never went ten yards away from George. He ran in and out moaning and whining, and at last he sat outside the door and lifted up his voice and howled day and night continually. His meaner instincts lay neglected; he ate nothing; his heart was bigger than his belly; he would not leave his friend even to feed himself. And still day and night, without cease, his passionate cry went up to heaven.

What passed in that single heart none can tell for certain but his Creator, nor what was uttered in that deplorable cry; love, sorrow, perplexity, dismay—all these, perhaps, and something of prayer—for still he lifted his sorrowful face towards heaven as he cried out in sore perplexity, distress, and fear for his poor master—Oh! o-o-o-h! o-o-o-o-h! o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-h!

So we must leave awhile poor, honest, unlucky George, sick of a fever, ten miles from the nearest hut. Leather-heart has gone from him to be a rich man's hireling.

Shallow-heart has fled to the forest, and is hunting kangaroos with all the inches of his soul.

Single-heart sits fasting from all but grief before the door, and utters heart-rending lamentable cries to earth and heaven.

CHAPTER XLII.

—— Jail is still a grim and castellated mountain of masonry, but a human heart beats and a human brain throbs inside it now.

Enter without fear of seeing children kill themselves, and bearded men faint like women or weep like children—horrible sights!

The prisoners no longer crouch and cower past the officers, nor the officers look at them and speak to them as if they were dogs, as they do in most of these places, and used to here.

Open this cell. A woman rises with a smile! why a smile? Because for months an open door has generally let in—what is always a great boon to a separate prisoner—a human creature with a civil word. We remember when an open door meant "Way for a ruffian and a fool to trample upon the solitary and sorrowful!"

What is this smiling personage doing? As I live, she is watchmaking! A woman watchmaking, with neat and taper fingers, and glass at her eye sometimes, but not always, for in vision, as well as in the sense of touch and patience, Nature has been bounteous to her. She is one of four. Eight, besides these four, were tried and found incapable of excellence in this difficult craft. They were put to other things; for permanent failures are not permitted in —— Jail. The theory is that every *homo* can turn some sort of labour to profit.

Difficulties occur often. Impossibilities will bar the way now and then; but there are so few real impossibilities. When a difficulty arises, the three hundred industrious arts and crafts are freely ransacked for a prisoner; ay! ransacked as few rich men would be bothered to sift the seven or eight liberal professions in order to fit a beloved son.

Here, as in the world, the average of talent is low. The majority can only learn easy things and vulgar things, and some can do higher things, and a few can do beautiful things, and one or two have developed first-rate gifts and powers.

There are 25 shoemakers (male); 12 tailors, of whom 6 female; 24 weavers, of whom 10 female; 4 watchmakers, all female; 6 printers and compositors, 5 female; 4 engrainers

of wood, 2 female. (In this art we have the first artist in Britain, our old acquaintance, Thomas Robinson. He has passed all his competitors by a simple process. Beautiful specimens of all the woods have been placed and kept before him, and for a month he has been forced to imitate Nature with his eye never off her. His competitors in the world imitate Nature from memory, from convention, or from tradition. By such processes truth and beauty are lost at each step down the ladder of routine. Mr. Eden gave clever Tom at first starting the right end of the stick, instead of letting him take the wrong.) 9 joiners and carpenters, 3 female; 3 who colour prints downright well, 1 female; 2 painters, 1 female; 3 pupils shorthand writing, 1 female.

[Fancy these attending the Old Bailey and taking it all down, solemn as judges.]

Workers in gutta-percha, modellers in clay, washers and getters-up of linen, hoe-makers, spade-makers, rake-makers, wood-carvers, stone-cutters, bakers, etc. etc. etc. etc. *ad infinitum*. Come to the hard-labour yard. Do you see those fifteen stables? There lurk in vain the rusty cranks; condemned first as liars, they fell soon after into disrepute as weapons of half-science, to degrade minds and bodies. They lurk there grim as the used-up giants in "Pilgrim's Progress," and like them can't catch a soul.

Hark to the music of the shuttle and the useful loom. We weave linen, cotton, woollen, linsey-woolsey, and, not to be behind the rogues outside, cottonsey-woolsey and cottonsey-silksey; damask we weave, and a little silk and poplin, and Mary Baker velvet itself for a treat now and then. We of the loom relieve the county of all expense in keeping us, and enrich a fund for taking care of discharged industrious prisoners until such time as they can soften prejudices and obtain lucrative employment. The old plan was to kick a prisoner out and say—

"There, dog! go without a rap among those who will look on you as a dog and make you starve or steal. We have taught you no labour but crank, and as there are no cranks in the outside world, the world not being such an idiot as we are, you must fill your belly by means of the only other thing you have ever been taught—theft."

Now the officers take leave of a discharged prisoner in English. Farewell; good-bye!—a contraction for "God be wi' ye," etc. It used to be in French—*Sans adieu! au revoir!* and the like.

Having passed the merry, useful looms, open this cell. A she-thief looks up with an eye six times as mellow as when we were here last. She is busy gilding. See with what an adroit and delicate touch the jade slips the long square knife under the gossamer gold-leaf which she has blown gently out of the book, and turns it over; and now she breathes gently and vertically on the exact centre of it, and the fragile yet rebellious leaf that has rolled itself up like a hedgehog is flattened by that human zephyr on the little leathern easel. Now she cuts it in three with vertical blade; now she takes her long flat brush, and applies it to her own hair once or twice; strange to say, the camel-hair takes from this contact a soupçon of some very slight and delicate animal oil, which enables the brush to take up the gold-leaf, and the artist lays a square of gold in its place on the plaster bull she is gilding. Said bull was cast in the prison by another female prisoner, who at this moment is preparing a green artificial meadow for the animal to stand in. These two girls had failed at the watch-making. They had sight and the fine sensation of touch required, but they lacked the caution, patience, and judgment so severe an art demanded; so their talents were directed elsewhere. This one is a first-rate gilder; she mistressed it entirely in three days.

The last thing they did in this way was an elephant. Cost of casting him, reckoning labour and the percentage he ought to pay to the mould, was 1*s.* 4*d.* Plaster, chrome, water-size and oil-size, 3*d.*; gold-leaf, 3*s.*; 1 foot of German velvet, 4*d.*; thread, needles, and wear of tools, 1*d.*—total, 5*s.*

Said gold elephant, standing on a purple cushion, was subjected to a severe test of his value. He was sent to a low auction-room in London. There he fell to the trade at 18*s.* This was a "knock-out" transaction; twelve buyers had agreed not to bid against one another in the auction-room, a conspiracy illegal but customary. The same afternoon these twelve held one of their little private unlawful auctions over him; here the bidding was like drops of blood oozing from flints, but at least it was *bonâ fide,* and he rose to 25*s.* The seven shillings premium was divided among the eleven sharpers. Sharper No. 12 carried him home, and sold him the very next day for 37*s.* to a lady who lived in Belgravia, but shopped in filthy alleys, misled perhaps by the phrase "dirt cheap."

Mr. Eden conceived him; two detected ones made him

at a cost of 5*s.*; twelve undetected ones caught him first for 18*s.*; and now he stands in Belgravia, and the fair ejaculate over him, "What a duck!"

The aggregate of labour to make and gild this elephant was not quite one woman's work (twelve hours). Taking 18*s.* as the true value of the work—for in this world the workman has commonly to sell his production under the above disadvantages, forced sale and the conspiracies of the unimprisoned—we have still 13*s.* for a day's work by a woman.

From the bull greater things are expected. The cast is from the bull of the Vatican, a bull true to Nature, and Nature adorned the very meadows when she produced the bull. What a magnificent animal is a bull! what a dewlap! what a front! what clean pasterns! what fearless eyes! what a deep diapason in his voice! of which, beholding this his true and massive effigy in —— Jail, we are reminded. When he stands muscular, majestic, sonorous gold, in his meadow pied with daisies, it shall not be "sweet," and "love," and "duck"—words of beauty, but no earthly signification; it shall be, "There, I forgive Europa!"

And need I say there was more aimed at in all this than pecuniary profit? Mr. Eden held that the love of production is the natural specific antidote to the love of stealing. He kindled in his prisoners the love of producing, of what some by an abuse of language call "creating," and the producers rose in the scale of human beings. Their faces showed it—the untamed look melted away—the white of the eye showed less, and the pupil and iris more, and better quality.

Gold-leaf when first laid on adheres in visible squares with uncouth edges, a ragged affair; then the gilder takes a camel-hair brush, and under its light and rapid touch the work changes as under a diviner's rod, so rapidly and majestically come beauty and finish over it. Perhaps no other art has so delicious a one minute as this is to the gilder. The first work our prisoner gilt she screamed with delight several times at this crisis. She begged to have the work left in her cell one day at least, "It lights up the cell and lights up my heart."

"Of course it does," said Mr. Eden. "Aha! what, there are greater pleasures in the world than sinning, are there?"

"That there are. I never was so pleased in my life. May I have it a few minutes?"

"My child, you shall have it till its place is taken by others like it. Keep it before your eyes, feed on it, and ask yourself which is the best, to work and add something useful or beautiful to the world's material wealth, or to steal; to be a little benefactor to your kind and yourself, or a little vermin preying on the industrious. Which is best?"

"I'll never take while I can make."

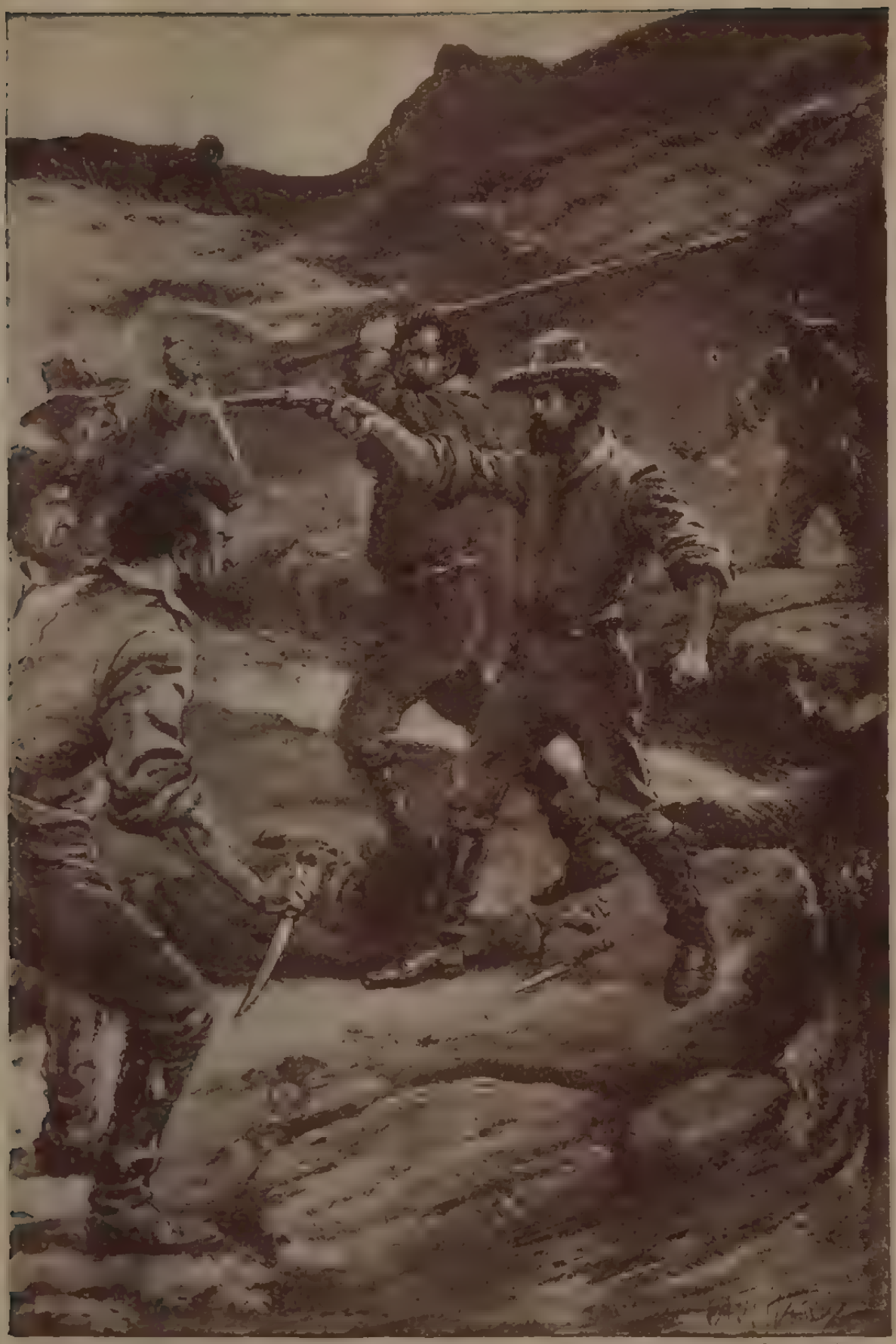
This is, of course, but a single specimen out of scores. To follow Mr. Eden from cell to cell, from mind to mind, from sex to sex, would take volumes and volumes. I only profess to reveal fragments of such a man. He never hoped from the mere separate cell the wonders that dreamers hope. It was essential to the reform of prisoners that moral contagion should be checkmated, and the cell was the mode adopted, because it is the laziest, cheapest, selfishest, and cruellest way of doing this. That no discretion was allowed him to let the converted or the well-disposed mix and sympathise, and compare notes, and confirm each other in good under a watchful officer's eye, this he thought a frightful blunder of the system.

Generally he held the good effect of separate confinement to be merely negative; he laughed to scorn the chimera that solitude is an active agent, capable of converting a rogue. Shut a rogue from rogues and let honest men in upon him—the honest men get a good chance to convert him, but, if they do succeed, it was not solitude that converted him, but healing contact. The moments that most good comes to him are the moments his solitude is broken.

He used to say solitude will cow a rogue and suspend his overt acts of theft by force, and so make him to a non-reflector seem no longer a thief; but the notion of the cell effecting permanent cures might honestly be worded thus: "I am a lazy self-deceiver, and want to do by machinery and without personal fatigue what St. Paul could only do by working with all his heart, with all his time, with all his wit, with all his soul, with all his strength, and with all himself." Or thus: "Confine the leopards in separate cages, Jock; *the cages* will take their spots out while ye're sleeping."

Generally this was Mr. Eden's theory of the cell—a check to further contamination but no more. He even saw in the cell much positive ill, which he set himself to qualify.

"Separate confinement breeds monstrous egotism," said



N.L.L. Robinson fired across George. *Page 454.*

he, "and egotism hardens the heart. You can't make any man good if you never let him say a kind word or do an unselfish action to a fellow-creature. Man is an acting animal. His real moral character all lies in his actions, and none of it in his dreams or cogitations. Moral stagnation or cessation of all bad acts and of all good acts is a state on the borders of every vice, and a million miles from virtue."

His reverence attacked the petrifaction and egotism of the separate cell as far as the shallow system of this prison let him. First, he encouraged prisoners to write their lives for the use of the prison; these were weeded, if necessary (the editor was strong-minded, and did not weed out the red poppies); printed, and circulated in the jail. The writer's number was printed at the foot if he pleased, but never his name. Biography begot a world of sympathy in the prison. Second, he talked to one prisoner acquainted with another prisoner's character, talked about No. 80 to No. 60, and would sometimes say, "Now, could you give No. 60 any good advice on this point?"

Then if 80's advice was good, he would carry it to 60, and 60 would think all the more of it that it came from one of his fellows.

Then in matters of art he would carry the difficulties of a beginner or a bungler to a proficient, and the latter would help the former. The pleasure of being kind on one side, a touch of gratitude on the other, seeds of interest and sympathy in both. Then such as had produced pretty things were encouraged to lend them to other cells to adorn them and stimulate the occupants.

For instance, No. 140, who gilded the bull, was reminded that No. 120, who had cast him, had never had the pleasure of setting him on her table in her gloomy cell, and so raising its look from dungeon to workshop. Then No. 140 said, "Poor No. 120! that is not fair; she shall have him half the day, or more if you like, sir."

Thus a grain of self-denial, justice, and charity was often drawn into the heart of a cell through the very keyhole.

No. 19, Robinson, did many a little friendly office for other figures, received their thanks, and, above all, obliging these figures warmed and softened his own heart.

You might hear such dialogues as this:—

No. 24.—And how is poor old No. 50 to-day (Strutt)?

Mr. Eden.—Much the same.

No. 24.—Do you think you will bring him round, sir?

Mr. Eden.—I have great hopes; he is much improved since he had the garden and the violin.

No. 24.—Will you give him my compliments, sir? No. 24's compliments, and tell him I bid him "never say die!"

Mr. Eden.—Well, ——, how are you this morning?

"I am a little better, sir. This room (the infirmary) is so sweet and airy, and they give me precious nice things to eat and drink."

"Are the nurses kind to you?"

"That they are, sir, kinder than I deserve."

"I have a message for you from No. — on your corridor."

"No! have you, sir?"

"He sends his best wishes for your recovery."

"Now that is very good of him."

"And he would be very glad to hear from yourself how you feel."

"Well, sir, you tell him I am a trifle better, and God bless him for troubling his head about me."

In short, his reverence reversed the Hawes system. Under that a prisoner was divested of humanity and became a number, and when he fell sick the sentiment created was, "The figure written on the floor of that cell looks faint." When he died or was murdered, "There is such and such a figure rubbed off our slate."

Mr. Eden made these figures signify flesh and blood even to those who never saw their human faces. When he had softened a prisoner's heart, then he laid the deeper truths of Christianity to that heart. They would not adhere to ice or stone or brass. He knew that till he had taught a man to love his brother, whom he had seen, he could never make him love God, whom he has not seen. To vary the metaphor, his plan was, first warm and soften your wax, then begin to shape it after Heaven's pattern. The old-fashioned way is freeze, petrify, and mould your wax by a single process. Not that he was mawkish. No man rebuked sin more terribly than he often rebuked it in many of these cells; and when he did so, see what he gained by the personal kindness that preceded these terrible rebukes! The rogue said, "What! is it so bad that his reverence, who, I know, has a regard for me, rebukes me for it like this? Why, it must be bad indeed!"

A loving friend's rebuke is a rebuke—sinks into the heart and convinces the judgment; an enemy's or stranger's

rebuke is invective, and irritates—not converts. The great vice of the new prisons is general self-deception varied by downright calculating hypocrisy. A shallow zealot like Mr. Lepel is sure to drive the prisoners into one or other of these. It was Mr. Eden's struggle to keep them out of it. He froze cant in the bud. Puritanical burglars tried Scriptural phrases on him as a matter of course, but they soon found it was the very worst lay they could get upon in —— Jail. The notion that a man can jump from the depths of vice up to the climax of righteous habits, spiritual-mindedness, at one leap, shocked his sense and terrified him for the daring dogs that profess these saltatory powers and the geese that believe it. He said to such, "Let me see you crawl heavenwards first, then walk heavenwards; it will be time enough to soar when you have lived soberly, honestly, piously a year or two—not here, where you are tied hands, feet, and tongue, but free among the world's temptations." He had no blind confidence in learned-by-heart texts. "Many a scoundrel has a good memory," said he.

Here he was quite opposed to his friend Lepel. This gentleman attributed a sort of physical virtue to Holy Writ poured anyhow into a human vessel. His plan of making a thief honest will appear incredible to a more enlightened age; yet it is widely accepted now, and its advocates call Mr. Eden a dreamer. It was this: he came into a cell, cold and stern, and set the rogues a lot of texts. Those that learned a great many he called good prisoners, and those that learned few, black sheep; and the prisoners soon found out that their life, bitter as it was, would be bitterer if they did not look sharp and learn a good many texts. So they learned lots, and the slyest scoundrels learned the most. "Why not?" said they; "in these cursed holes we have nothing better to do, and it is the only way to get the parson's good word, and that is always worth having in jail."

One rogue, on getting out, explained his knowledge of five hundred texts thus: "What, did it hurt me learning texts? I'd just as lief be learning texts as turning a crank, and as soon be d——d as either."

This fellow had been one of Mr. Lepel's sucking saints, a show prisoner. The Bible and brute force, how odd they sound together! Yet such was the Lepel system, humbug apart. Put a thief in a press between an Old Testament

and a New Testament; turn the screw, crush the texts in, and the rogue's vices out! Conversion made easy! What a wonder he opposes cunning cloaked with religion to brutality cloaked under religion. Ay! brutality, and laziness, and selfishness, all these are the true foundation of that system. Selfishness—for such a man won't do anything he does not like. No! "Why should I make myself 'all things to all men' to save a soul? I will save them this one way or none—this is my way, and they shall all come to it," says the Rev. Procrustes, forgetting that if the heart is not won, in vain is the will crushed; or perhaps not caring so that he gets his own way.

To work on Mr. Eden's plan is a herculean effort day by day repeated; but to set texts is easy, easier even than to learn them—and how easy that is appears from the multitude of incurable felons who have swapped texts for tickets-of-leave. Messieurs Lepel, who teach solitary depressed sinners the Bible with screw and lifted lash and no love nor pity, a word in your ear. Begin a step higher. Go first to some charitable priest, and at his feet learn that Bible yourselves!

Forgive my heat, dear reader. I am not an Eden, and these fellows rile me when I think of the good they might do, and they do nothing but force hypocrisy upon men who were bad enough without that. I allow a certain latitude, don't want to swim in hot water by quarrelling with every madman or every dunce, but I do doubt any man's right to combine contradictory vices. Now these worthies are stupid yet wild, thick-headed yet delirious—tortoises and March hares.

My sketch of Mr. Eden and his ways is feeble and unworthy, but I conclude it with one master-stroke of eulogy—He was the opposite of these men.

CHAPTER XLIII.

We left Thomas Robinson writing his life. He has written it. It has been printed by prisoners and circulated among prisoners. One copy lay in Robinson's cell till he left the prison, and to this copy were appended Mr. Eden's remarks in MS. This autobiography is a self-drawn portrait of a true Bohemian, and his mind from boyhood up to the

date when he fell into my hands. Unfortunately we cannot afford so late in our story to make any retrograde step. The "Autobiography of a Thief" must therefore be thrust into my Appendix, or printed elsewhere.

The reader has seen Robinson turned to a fiend by cruelty, and turned back to a man by humanity.

On this followed many sacred, softening, improving lessons, and as he loved Mr. Eden his heart was open to them.

Most prisoners are very sensible of genuine kindness, and docile as wax in the hands of those who show it. They are the easiest class in the world to impress: the difficulty is to make the impression permanent. But the people who pretend to you that kindness does not greatly affect, persuade, and help convince them, HAVE NEVER TRIED ANYTHING BUT BRUTALITY, and never will, for nothing greater, wiser, or better is in them.

I will now indicate the other phases through which his mind passed in —— Jail.

Being shown that his crimes were virtually the cause of Mary's hapless life and untimely death, and hard pressed by his father confessor, he fell into religious despondency: believed his case desperate, and his sins too many for Heaven's mercy.

Of all states of mind, this was the one Mr. Eden most dreaded. He had observed that the notion they cannot be reconciled to God and man is the cause of prisoners' recklessness, and one great means by which jail officers and society, England A.D. 185—confirm them in ill.

He soothed and cheered the poor fellow with many a hopeful message from the gospel of mercy, and soon drew him out of the Slough of Despond; but he drew him out with so eager an arm that up went this impressionable personage from despond to the fifth heaven. He was penitent, forgiven, justified, sanctified, all in three weeks.

Moreover, he now fell into a certain foul habit. Of course Scripture formed a portion of his daily reading and discourse with the chaplain: Robinson had a memory that seized and kept everything like a vice, so now a text occurred to him for every occasion, and he interwove them with all his talk. Your shallow observers would have said, "What a hypocrite!"

Not a hypocrite, O Criticaster, but a chameleon! who had been months out of the atmosphere of vice and in an atmosphere of religion.

His reverence broke him off his nasty habit of chattering Bible, and generally cooled him down. Finally he became sober, penitent for his past life, and firmly resolved to lead a better. With this began to mingle ambition to rise very high in the world, and a violent impatience to begin.

Through all these phases ran one excellent and saving thing, a genuine attachment to his good friend the chaplain. The attachment was reciprocal, and there was something touching in the friendship of two men so different in mind and worldly station. But they had suffered together. And indeed a much more depraved prisoner than Robinson would have loved such a benefactor and brother as Eden, and many a scoundrel in this place did love him as well as he could love anything; and as to the other, the clue to him is simple. While the vulgar, self-deceiving moralist loathes the detected criminal, and never (whatever he may think) really rises to abhorrence of crime, the saint makes two steps upwards towards the mind of Heaven itself, abhors crime, and loves, pities, and will not despair of the criminal.

But besides this, Robinson was an engaging fellow, full of thought and full of facts, and the Rev. Francis Tender-Conscience often spent an extra five minutes in his cell, and then reproached himself for letting the more interesting personage rob other depressed and thirsty souls of those drops of dew.

One day Mr. Eden, who had just entered the cell, said to Robinson, "Give me your hand. It is as I feared; your nerves are going."

"Are they?" said Robinson ruefully.

"Do you not observe that you are becoming tremulous?"

"I notice that when my door is opened suddenly, it makes me shake a little, and twitches come in my thigh."

"I feared as much. It is not every man that can bear separate confinement for twelve months; you cannot."

"I shall have to, whether I can or not."

"Will you?"

Three days after this Mr. Eden came into his cell and said with a sad smile, "I have good news for you; you are going to leave me."

"Oh, your reverence! is that good news?"

"Those who have the disposal of you are beginning to see that all punishment (except hanging) is for the welfare of the culprit, and must never be allowed to injure him.

Strutt left the prison for my house a fortnight ago, and you are to cross the water next week."

"Oh, your reverence! Heaven forgive me for feeling glad."

"For being human, eh, my poor fellow?" In the course of this conversation Mr. Eden frankly regretted that Robinson was going so soon. "Four months more prison would have made you safer, and I would have kept you here till the last minute of your sentence for the good of your soul," said he grimly; "but your body and nerves might have suffered," added he tenderly; "we must do all for the best."

A light burst on Robinson. "Why, your reverence," cried he, "is it for fear? Why, you don't ever think that I shall turn rogue again after I get out of prison?"

"You are going among a thousand temptations."

"What! do you really think all your kindness has been wasted on me? Why, sir, if a thousand pounds lay there, I would not stretch out my hand to take one that did not belong to me. How ungrateful you must think me, and what a fool into the bargain, after all my experience!"

"Ungrateful you are not, but you are naturally a fool —a weak, flexible fool: a man with a tenth of your gifts would lead you by the nose into temptation. But I warn you if you fall now, conscience will prick you as it never yet has; you will be miserable, and yet, though miserable, perhaps will never rise again, for remorse is not penitence."

Robinson was so hurt at this want of confidence that he said nothing in reply, and then Mr. Eden felt sorry he had said so much. "For, after all," thought he, "these are mere misgivings; by uttering them I only pain him—I can't make him share them: let me think what I can do."

That very day he wrote to Susan Merton. The letter contained the following: "Thomas Robinson goes to Australia next week; he will get a ticket-of-leave almost immediately on landing. I am in great anxiety; he is full of good resolves, but his nature is unstable, yet I should not fear to trust him anywhere if I could but choose his associates. In this difficulty I have thought of George Fielding. You know I can read characters, and though you never summed George up to me, his sayings and doings reveal him to me. He is a man in whom honesty is engrained. Poor Robinson, with such a companion, would be as honest as the day, and a useful friend,

for he is full of resources. Then, dear friend, will you do a Christian act and come to our aid? I want you to write a note to Mr. Fielding and let this poor fellow take it to him. Armed with this, my convert will not be shy of approaching the honest man; and the exile will not hate me for this trick, will he? I send you inclosed the poor, clever fool's life written by himself, and printed by my girls. Read it, and tell me are we wrong in making every effort to save such a man?" etc.

By return of post came a reply from Susan Merton, full of pity for Robinson, and affectionate zeal to co-operate in any way with her friend. Inclosed was a letter addressed to George Fielding, the envelope not closed. Mr. Eden slipped in a bank-note and a very small envelope and closed it, placed it in a larger envelope, sealed that, and copied the first address on its cover.

He now gave Robinson more of his time than ever, and seemed to cling to him with almost a motherly apprehension. Robinson noticed it, and felt it very much, and his joy at getting out of prison oozed away more and more as the day drew near.

That day came at last. Robinson was taken by Evans to the chaplain's room to bid him farewell. He found him walking about the room in deep thought. "Robinson, when you are thousands of miles from me, bear this in mind, that if you fall again you will break my heart."

"I know it, sir—I know it; for you would say, 'If I could not save him, who can I hope to?'"

"You would not like to break my heart—to discourage your friend and brother in the good work, the difficult work?"

"I would rather die; if it is to be so, I pray Heaven to strike me dead in this room while I am fit to die."

"Don't say that; live to repair your crimes, and to make me prouder of you than a mother of her first-born." He paused and walked the room in silence. Presently he stopped in front of Robinson. "You have often said you owed me something."

"My life and my soul's salvation," was the instant reply.

"I ask a return; square the account with me."

"That I can never do."

"You can! I will take two favours in return for all you say I have done for you. No idle words, but yes or no upon your honour. Will you grant them, or won't you?"

"I will, upon my honour."

"One is that you will pray very often, not only morning and evening, but at sunset, at that dangerous hour to you when evil association begins; at that hour honest men retire out of sight and rogues come abroad like vermin and wild beasts; but most of all at any hour of the day or night a temptation comes near you, at that moment pray! Don't wait to see how strong the temptation is, and whether you can't conquer it without help from above. At the sight of an enemy, put on heavenly armour—pray! No need to kneel or to go apart! Two words secretly cast heavenwards, 'Lord help me,' are prayer. Will you so pray?"

"Yes."

"Then give me your hand; here is a plain gold ring to recall this sacred promise; put it on, wear it, and look at it, and never lose it or forget your promise."

"Them that take it must cut my hand off with it."

"Enough! it is a promise. My second request is that the moment you are free, you will go and stay with an honest man."

"I ask no better, sir, if he will have me."

"George Fielding, he has a farm near Bathurst."

"George Fielding, sir? He affronted me when I was in trouble. It was no more than I deserved. I forgive him; but you don't know the lad, sir. He would not speak to me; he would not look at me. He would turn his back on me if we ran against one another in a wilderness."

"Here is a talisman that will ensure you a welcome from him—a letter from the woman he loves. Come, yes or no?"

"I will, sir, for your sake, not for theirs. Sir, do pray give me something harder to do for you than these two things."

"No, I won't overweight you, nor encumber your memory with pledges—these two and no more. And here we part. See what it is to sin against society. I whom your conversation has so interested, to whom your company is so agreeable—in one word, I who love you, can find no kinder word to say to you to-day than this—let me never see your face again—let me never hear your name in this world!"

His voice trembled as he said these words, and he wrung Robinson's hand, and Robinson groaned and turned away.

"So now I can do no more for you; I must leave the rest to God." And with these words, for the second time in their acquaintance, the good soul kneeled down and prayed aloud for this man. And this time he prayed at length with ardour and tenderness unspeakable. He prayed as for a brother on the brink of a precipice. He wrestled with Heaven; and ere he concluded he heard a subdued sound near him, and it was poor Robinson, who, touched and penetrated by such angelic love, and awe-struck to hear a good man pour out his very soul at the mercy-seat of Heaven, had crept timidly to his side and knelt there, bearing his mute part in this fervent supplication.

As Mr. Eden rose from his knees, Evans knocked gently at the door; he had been waiting some minutes, but had heard the voice of prayer, and reverently forbore to interrupt it. At his knock the priest and the thief started. The priest suddenly held out both his hands; the thief bowed his head and kissed them many times, and on this they parted hastily, with swelling hearts and not another word, except the thousands that their moist eyes exchanged in one single look—the last.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The ship was to sail in a week, and meantime Robinson was in the hulks at Portsmouth. Now the hulks are a disgrace to Europe, and a most incongruous appendage to a system that professes to cure by separate confinement. One or two of the worst convicts made the usual overtures of evil companionship to Robinson. These were coldly declined, and it was a good sign that Robinson, being permitted by the regulations to write one letter, did not write to any of his old pals in London or elsewhere, but to Mr. Eden. He told him that he regretted his quiet cell, where his ears were never invaded with blasphemy and indecency, things he never took pleasure in even at his worst, and missed his reverence's talk sadly. He concluded by asking for some good books by way of antidote.

He received no answer while at Portsmouth, but the vessel having sailed, and lying two days off Plymouth,

his name was called just before she weighed again, and a thick letter handed to him. He opened it eagerly, and two things fell on the deck—a sovereign and a tract. The sovereign rolled off and made for the sea. Robinson darted after it, and saved it from the deep and the surrounding rogues. Then he read a letter which was also in the inclosure. It was short: in it Mr. Eden told him he had sent him the last tract printed in the prison. "It is called, 'The Wages of Sin is Death.' It is not the same one you made into cards; that being out of print and the author dead, I have been tempted by that good, true title to write another. I think you will value it none the less for being written by me and printed by our brothers and sisters in this place. I inclose one pound, that you may not be tempted for want of a shilling."

Robinson looked round for the tract; it was not to be seen; nobody had seen it. *N.B.*—It had been through a dozen light-fingered hands already, and was now being laughed at and blasphemed over by two filthy ruffians behind a barrel on the lower deck. Robinson was first in a fury, and then, when he found it was really stolen from him, he was very much cut up. "I wish I had lifted it and let the money roll. However," thought he, "if I keep quiet I shall hear of it."

He did hear of it, but he never saw it; for one of these hardened creatures that had got hold of it had a spite against Robinson for refusing his proffered amity, and the malicious dog, after keeping it several hours, hearing Robinson threaten to inform against whoever had taken it, made himself safe and gratified his spite by flinging it into the Channel.

This too came in due course to Robinson's ears. He moralised on it. "I made the first into the devil's books," said he, "and now a child of the devil has robbed me of the second. I shan't get a third chance. I would give my sovereign and more to see what his reverence says about 'The Wages of Sin is Death.' The very title is a sermon. I pray Heaven the dirty hand that robbed me of it may rot off at the—— No! I forgot. Bless, and curse not!"

And now Robinson was confined for five months in a wooden prison with the scum of our jails. No cell to take refuge in from evil society. And in that wretched five months this perpetual contact with criminals, many of

them all but incurable, took the gloss off him. His good resolutions were unshaken, but his repugnance to evil associates became gradually worn away.

At last they landed at Sydney. They were employed for about a fortnight in some Government works a mile from town, and at the end of that time he was picked out by a gentleman who wanted a servant.

Robinson's work was to call him (not too early), to clean his boots, go on errands into the town, and be always in the way till five o'clock. From that hour until about two in the morning Mr. Miles devoted to amusement, returning with his latch-key, and often rousing the night-owl and his servant with a bacchanalian or Anacreontic melody. In short, Mr. Miles was a loose fish, a bachelor who had recently inherited the fortune of an old screw his uncle, and was spending thrift in all the traditional modes—horses, dogs, women, cards, etc.

He was a good-natured creature, and one morning as he brought him up his hot water and his soda-water, Robinson ventured on a friendly remonstrance.

Mr. Miles flung canting rogue and half a dozen oaths and one boot at his head, and was preparing to add a tumbler, when his mentor whipped into the lobby.

Robinson could not have fallen to a worse master than this, whose irregularities were so regular that his servant had always seven hours to spend in the town as he pleased. There he was often solicited to join in depredations on property. For he found half his old acquaintances were collected by the magic of the law on this spot of earth.

Robinson took a particular pride in telling these gentlemen that he had no objection to taking a friendly glass with them, and talking over old times, but that as for taking what did not belong to him, all that was over for ever. In short, he improved on Mr. Eden's instructions. Instead of flying from temptation like a coward conscious of weakness, he nobly faced it, and walked cool, collected, and safe on the edge of danger.

One good result of this was that he spent his wages every month faster than he got them, and spent the clothes his master gave him, and these were worth more than his wages, for Mr. Miles was going the pace—wore nothing after the gloss was off it. But Robinson had never lived out of prison at less than five hundred per

annum, and the evening is a good time in the day for spending money in a town, and his evenings were all his own.

One evening a young tradeswoman, with whom he was flirting, in the character of a merchant's clerk tremendously busy, who could only get out in the evening; this young woman, whom he had often solicited to go to the theatre, consented.

"I could go with you to-morrow, my sister and I," said she.

Robinson expressed his delight, but consulting his pockets, found he had not the means of paying for their seats, and he could not pawn any clothes, for he had but two sets. One (yellowish) that Government compelled him to wear by daylight, and one a present from his master (black). That, together with a moustache, admitted him into the bosom of society at night. What was to be done? Propose to the ladies to pay?—that was quite without precedent. Ask his master for an advance?—impossible. His master was gone kangaroo-hunting for three days. Borrow some of his master's clothes and pawn them?—that was too like theft. He would pawn his ring; it would only be for a day or two, and he would not spend a farthing more till he had got it back.

He pawned Mr. Eden's ring; it just paid for their places at the theatre, where they saw the living puppets of the colony mop and mow and rant under the title of acting. This was so interesting that Robinson was thinking of his ring the whole time, and how to get it back. The girls agreed between themselves they had never enjoyed so dull a cavalier.

The next day a line from Mr. Miles to say that he should not be back for a week. No hope of funds from him. So Robinson pawned his black coat and got back his ring; and as the trousers and waistcoat were no use now, he pawned them for pocket-money, which soon dissolved.

Mr. Robinson now was out of spirits.

"Service is not the thing for me. I am of an active turn—I want to go into business that will occupy me all day long—business that requires some head. Even his reverence, the first man in the country, acknowledged my talents—and what is the vent for them here? The blacking-bottle."

CHAPTER XLV.

In a low public outside the town, in a back-room, with their arms on the table and their low foreheads nearly touching, sat whispering two men—types: one had the deep-sunk, colourless eyes, the protruding cheek-bones, the shapeless mouth, and the broad chin, good in itself, but bad in the above connection; the other had the vulpine chin and the fiendish eyebrows descending on the very nose in two sharp arches. Both had the restless eye, both the short-cropped hair—society's comment, congruous and auxiliary, though in itself faint by the side of habit's seal and Nature's.

A small north window dimly lighted the gloomy, uncouth cabin, and revealed the sole furniture; four chairs too heavy to lift, too thick to break, and a table discoloured with the stains of a thousand filthy debauches, and dotted here and there with the fresh ashes of pipes and cigars.

In this appropriate frame behold two felons putting their heads together; by each felon's side smoked in a glass, hot with heat and hotter with alcohol, the enemy of man. It would be difficult to give their dialogue, for they spoke in thieves' Latin. The substance was this: They had scent of a booty in a house that stood by itself three miles out of the town. But the servants were incorruptible, and they could not get access to inspect the premises, which were intricate. Now your professional burglar will no more venture upon unexplored premises than a good seaman will run into an unknown channel without pilot, soundings, or chart. It appeared from the dialogue that the two men were acquainted with a party who knew these premises, having been more than once inside them with his master.

The more rugged one objected to this party. "He is no use; he has turned soft. I have heard him refuse a dozen good plants the last month. Besides, I don't want a canting son of a gun for my pal—ten to one if he don't turn tail and perhaps split." *N.B.*—All this not in English, but in thieves' cant, with an oath or a nasty expression at every third word, the sentences measled with them.

"You don't know how to take him," replied he of the Mephistopheles' eyebrow. "He won't refuse me."

"Why not?"

"He is an old pal of mine, and I never found the thing I could not persuade him to. He does not know how to say me nay. You may bully him and queer him till all is blue, and he won't budge, and that is the lay you have been upon with him. Now I shall pull a long face—make up a story—take him by his soft bit—tell him I can't get on without him, and patter old lang syne to him: then we'll get a fiddle and lots of whisky; and when we have had a reel, and he has shaken his foot on the floor, and drank a gill or two, you will see him thaw, and then you leave him to me and don't put in your jaw to spoil it. If we get him it will be all right—he is No. 1; his little finger has seen more than both our carcasses put together."

CHAPTER XLVI.

FOUR days after this, mephistopheles with a small m and brutus with a little b sat again in the filthy little cabin where men hatch burglaries, but this time the conference wore an air of expectant triumph.

"Didn't I tell you?"

"You didn't do it easy."

"No, I had almost to go on my knees to him."

"He isn't worth so much trouble."

"He is worth it ten times over. Look at this," and the speaker produced a plan of the premises they were plotting against. "Could you have done this?"

"I don't say I could."

"Could any man you know have done it? See, here is every room and every door and window and passage put down, and what sort of keys and bolts and fastenings to each."

"How came he to know so much? he never was in the house but twice."

"A top-sawyer like him looks at everything, with an eye to business: if he was in a church, he'd twig the candlesticks and the fastenings, while the rest were mooning into the parson's face—he can't help it."

"Well, he may be a top-sawyer, but I don't like him. See how loath he was, and when he did agree how he turned to and drank as if he would drown his pluck before it could come to anything."

"Wait till you see him work. He will shake all that nonsense to blazes when he finds himself out under the moon with the swag on one side and the gallows on the other."

To go back a little: Mr. Miles did not return at the appointed day, and Robinson, who had no work to do, and could not amuse himself without money, pawned Mr. Eden's ring. He felt ashamed and sorrowful, but not so much so as the first time.

This evening, as he was strolling moodily through the suburbs, a voice hailed him in tones of the utmost cordiality. He looked up and there was an old pal, with whom he had been associated in many a merry bout and pleasant felony; he had not seen the man for two years; a friendly glass was offered and accepted. Two girls were of the party, to oblige whom Robinson's old acquaintance sent for Blind Bill, the fiddler, and soon Robinson was dancing and shouting with the girls like mad—"high cut," "side cut," "heel and toe," "sailor's fling," and the "double shuffle."

He did not leave till three in the morning, and after a promise to meet the same little party again next evening —to dance and drink, and drive away dull care.

CHAPTER XLVII.

On a certain evening some days later, the two men, whose faces were definitions, sat on a bench outside that little public in the suburbs—one at the end of a clay pipe, the other behind a pewter mug. It was dusk.

"He ought to be here soon," said the one into whose forehead holes seemed dug and little bits of some vitreous substance left at the bottom.—"Well, mate," cried he harshly, "what do you want that you stick to us so tight?" This was addressed to a pedlar who had been standing opposite showing the contents of his box with a silent eloquence.

Now this very asperity made the portable shopman say to himself, "Wants me out of the way—perhaps buy me out." So he stuck where he was and exhibited his wares.

"We don't want your gimcracks," said mephistopheles quietly.

The man eyed his customers, and did not despair. "But, gents," said he, "I have got other things besides gimcracks; something that will suit you if you can read."

"Of course we can read," replied sunken-eyes haughtily; and in fact they had been too often in jail to escape this accomplishment.

The pedlar looked furtively in every direction, and after this precaution pressed a spring and brought a small drawer out from the bottom of his pack. The two rogues winked at one another. Out of the drawer the pedlar whipped a sealed packet.

"What is it?" asked mephistopheles, beginning to take an interest.

"Just imported from England," said the pedlar, a certain pomp mingling with his furtive and mysterious manner.

"—— England," was the other's patriotic reply.

"And translated from the French."

"That is better! but what is it?"

"Them that buy it, they will see!"

"Something flash?"

"Rather, I should say."

"Is there plenty about the women in it?"

The trader answered obliquely.

"What are we obliged to keep it dark for?" the other put in, "Why, of course there is."

"Well," said sunken-eyes, affecting carelessness, "what do you want for it?—Got sixpence, Bill?"

"I sold the last to a gentleman for three-and-sixpence. But as this is the last I've got—say half-a-crown."

Sunken-eyes swore at the pedlar. "What! half-a-crown for a book no thicker than a quire of paper?"

"Only half-a-crown for a thing I could be put in prison for selling. Is not my risk to be paid as well as my leaves?"

This logic went home, and after a little higgling two shillings were offered and accepted, but in the very act of commerce the trader seemed to have a misgiving.

"I daren't do it unless you promise faithfully never to tell you had it of me. I have got a character to lose and I would not have it known, not for the world, that James Walker had sold such loose—licentious—— "

"Oh, what, it is very spicy, is it? Come, hand it over. There's the two bob."

"My poverty and not my will consents," said the trader.

"There, you be off, or we shall have all the brats coming round us."

The pedlar complied and moved off, and so willing was he to oblige his customers, that on turning the corner he shouldered his pack and ran with great agility down the street, till he gained a network of small alleys, in which he wriggled and left no trace.

Meanwhile sunken-eyes had put his tongue to the envelope and drawn out the contents. "I'll go into the light and see what it is all about."

mephistopheles, left alone, had hardly given his pipe two sucks ere brutus returned, black with rage, and spouting oaths like a whale.

"Why, what is the matter?"

"Matter! Didn't he sell this to me for a flash story?"

"Why, he didn't say so; but certainly he dropped a word about loose books."

"Of course he did."

"Well, and ain't they?"

"Ain't they!" cried the other with fury. "Here, you young shaver, bring the candle out here. Ain't they? No, they ain't, —— and —— and —— the ——. Look here!"

mephisto.—"Mend your Ways," a tract.

brutus.—I'll break his head instead.

mephisto.—"Narrative of Mr. James the Missionary."

brutus.—The cheating, undermining rip!

mephisto.—And here is another to the same tune.

brutus.—Didn't I tell you so? The hypocritical, humbugging rascal——

mephisto.—Stop a bit. Here is a little one: "Memoirs of a Gentleman's Housekeeper."

brutus.—Oh, is there? I did not see that.

mephisto.—You are so hasty. The case mayn't be so black as it looks. The others might be thrown in to make up the parcel. Hold the candle nearer.

brutus.—Ay! let us see about the housekeeper.

The two men read "The Housekeeper" eagerly, but as they read, the momentary excitement of hope died out of their faces. Not a sparkle of the ore they sought; all was dross. "The Housekeeper" was one of those who make pickles, not eat them, and in a linen apron a yard wide save their master's money from the fangs of cook and footman, not help him scatter it in a satin gown.

There was not even a stray hint or an indelicate expression for the poor fellow's two shillings. The fraud was complete. It was not like the ground coffee, pepper, and mustard in a London shop, in which there is as often as not a pinch of real coffee, mustard, and pepper to a pound of chicory and bullock's blood, of red-lead, dirt, flour, and turmeric. Here the "do" was pure.

Then brutus relieved his swelling heart by a string of observations, partly rhetorical, partly zoological. He devoted to horrible plagues every square inch of the pedlar, enumerating particularly those interior organs that subserve vitality, and concluded by vowing solemnly to put a knife into him the first fair opportunity. "I'll teach the rogue to——" Sell you medicine for poison, eh?

mephistopheles, either because he was a more philosophic spirit or was not the one out of pocket, took the blow more coolly. "It is a bite and no mistake. But what of it? Our money," said he with a touch of sadness, "goes as it comes. This is only two bob flung in the dirt. We should not have invested them in the Three per Cents., and to-night's swag will make it up."

He then got a fresh wafer and sealed the pamphlets up again. "There," said he, "you keep dark, and sell the first flat you come across the same way the varmint sold you."

brutus, sickened at heart by the pedlar's iniquity, revived at the prospect of selling some fellow-creature as he had been sold. He put the paper-trap in his pocket; and, cheated of obscenity, consoled himself with brandy such as Bacchus would not own, but Beelzebub would brew for man if permitted to keep an earthly distillery. Presently they were joined by the third man, and for two hours the three heads might all have been covered by one bushel-basket, and pedlar Walker's heartless fraud was forgotten in business of a higher order.

At last mephistopheles gave brutus a signal, and they rose to interrupt the potations of the new-comer, who was pouring down fire and hot water in rather a reckless way.

"We won't all go together," said mephistopheles. "You two meet me at Jonathan's ken in an hour."

As brutus and the new-comer walked along, an idea came to brutus. "Here is a fellow that passes for a sharp. What if I sell him my pamphlets and get a laugh at his expense?—Mate," said he, "here is a flash book all sealed up. What will you give me for it?"

"Well, I don't much care for that sort of reading, old fellow."

"But this is cheap. I got it a bargain. Come, a shilling won't hurt you for it. See, there is more than one under the cover."

Now, the other had been drinking till he was in that state in which a good-natured fellow's mind, if decomposed, would be found to be all "Yes," and "Dine with me to-morrow," so he fell at once into the trap.

"I'll give it you, my boy," said he. "Let us see it. There are more than one inside it. You're an honest fellow. Owe you a shilling." And the sealed parcel went into his pocket. Then, seeing brutus look rather rueful at this way of doing business, he hiccoughed out, "Stop your bob out of the swag"—and chuckled.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A SNOW-WHITE suburban villa standing alone with its satellites, that occupied five times as much space as itself; coach-house, stable, offices, green-house clinging to it like dew to a lily, and hot-house farther in the rear. A wall of considerable height inclosed the whole. It looked as secure and peaceful as innocent in the fleeting light the young moon cast on it every time the passing clouds left her clear a moment. Yet at this calm, thoughtful hour, crime was waiting to invade this pretty little place.

Under the scullery-window lurked brutus and mephistopheles, faces blackened, tools in hand, ready to whip out a pane of said window and so penetrate the kitchen, and from the kitchen the pantry, where they made sure of a few spoons, and up the back-stairs to the plate-chest. They would be in the house even now, but a circumstance delayed them—a light was burning on the second floor. Now it was contrary to their creed to enter a house where a light was burning, above all, if there was the least chance of that light being in a sitting-room. Now they had been some hours watching the house, and that light had been there all the time, therefore argued mephistopheles, "It is not a farthing glim in a bedroom, or we should have seen it lighted. It is someone up. We must wait till they roost."

They waited and waited and waited. Still the light burned. They cursed the light. No wonder. Light seems the natural enemy of evil deeds. They began to get bitter, and their bodies cold. Even burglary becomes a bore when you have to wait too long idle out in the cold.

At last, at about half-past two, the light went out; then keenly listening, the two sons of darkness heard a movement in the house, and more than one door open and shut, and then the sound of feet going rapidly down the road towards Sydney.

"Why, it is a party only just broke up. Lucky I would not work till the glim was out."

"But I say, Bill, he is at that corner—the nobs must have passed close to him—suppose they saw him."

"He is not so green as let them see him."

The next question was how long they should wait to let the inmates close their peepers. All had been still and dark more than half an hour when the pair began to work. mephisto took out a large piece of putty and dabbed it on the middle of the pane; this putty he worked in the centre up to a pyramid; this he held with his left hand, while with his right he took out his glazier's diamond and cut the pane all round the edges. By the hold the putty gave him, he prevented the pane from falling inside the house and making a noise, and finally whipped it out clean and handed it to brutus. A moment more the two men were in the scullery, thence into the kitchen through a door which they found open; in the kitchen were two doors—trying one, they found it open into a larder. Here casting the light of his dark lantern round, brutus discovered some cold fowl and a ham; they took these into the kitchen, and somewhat coolly took out their knives and ate a hasty but hearty supper. Their way of hacking the ham was as lawless as all the rest. They then took off their shoes and dropped them outside the scullery-window, and now the serious part of the game began. Creeping like cats, they reached the pantry, and, sure enough, found more than a dozen silver spoons and forks of different sizes that had been recently used. These they put into a small bag, and mephisto went back through the scullery into the back-garden, and hid these spoons in a bush.

"Then, if we should be interrupted, we can come back for them."

And now the game became more serious and more

nervous; the pair drew their clasp-knives and placed them in their bosoms ready in case of extremity; then creeping like cats, one foot at a time and then a pause, ascended the back-stairs, at the top of which was a door. But this door was not fastened, and in another moment they passed through it and were on the first landing. The plan, correct in every particular, indicated the plate-closet to their right: a gleam from the lantern showed it; the keyhole was old-fashioned, as also described, and in a moment brutus had it open. Then mephisto whipped out a green baize bag with compartments, and in a minute these adroit hands had stowed away cups, tureens, baskets, soup-spoons, etc., to the value of three hundred pounds, and scarce a chink heard during the whole operation. It was done; a look passed as much as to say this is enough, and they crept back silent and cat-like as they had come brutus leading with the bag. Now just as he had his hand on the door through which they had come up—snick! click!—a door was locked somewhere down below.

brutus looked round and put the bag gently down. "Where?" he whispered.

"Near the kitchen," was the reply, scarcely audible.

"Sounded to me to come from the hall," whispered the other.

Both men changed colour, but retained their presence of mind and their cunning. brutus stepped back to the plate-closet, put the bag in it, and closed it, but without locking it. "Stay there," whispered he, "and if I whistle, run out the back-way empty-handed. If I mew, out with the bag and come out by the front-door; nothing but inside bolts to it, plan says."

They listened a moment—there was no fresh sound. Then brutus slipped down the front-stairs in no time; he found the front-door not bolted; he did not quite understand that, and, drawing a short bludgeon, he opened it very cautiously; the caution was not superfluous. Two gentlemen made a dash at him from the outside the moment the door was open; one of their heads cracked like a broken bottle under the blow the ready ruffian struck him with his bludgeon, and he dropped like a shot; but another was coming flying across the lawn with a drawn cutlass, and brutus, finding himself over-matched, gave one loud whistle and flew across the hall, making for the kitchen. Flew he never so fast, mephisto was there an instant before him.

As for the gentleman at the door, he was encumbered with his hurt companion, who fell across his knees as he rushed at the burglar. brutus got a start of some seconds and dashed furiously into the kitchen, and flew to the only door between them and the scullery-window. THE DOOR WAS LOCKED.

The burglar's eyes gleamed in their deep caverns. "Back, Will, and cut through them," he cried, and out flashed his long bright knife.

CHAPTER XLIX.

WHILE the two burglars were near the scullery-window, watching the light in the upper story, a third man stood sentinel on the opposite side of the house; he was but a few yards from the public road, yet hundreds would have passed and no man seen him, for he had placed himself in a thick shadow flat against the garden-wall. His office was to signal danger from his side should any come. Now the light that kept his comrades inactive was not on his side of the house; he waited, therefore, expecting every moment their signal that the job was done. On this the cue was to slip quietly off, and all make by different paths for the low public-house described above, and there divide the swag.

The man waited and waited and waited for this signal; it never came—we know why. Then he became impatient—miserable; he was out of his element--wanted to be doing something. At last all this was an intolerable bore. Not feeling warm towards the job, he had given the active business to his comrades, which he now regretted for two reasons: first, he was kept here stagnant and bored; and second, they must be a pair of bunglers: he'd have robbed a parish in less time. He would light a cigar. Tobacco blunts all ills, even ennui. Putting his hand in his pocket for a cigar, it ran against a hard, square substance. What is this?—oh! the book mephisto had sold him. No, he would not smoke; he would see what the book was all about. He knelt down and took off his hat, and put his dark lantern inside it before he ventured to move the slide; then undid the paper, and putting it into the hat, threw the concentrated rays on the contents, and

peered in to examine them. Now the various little pamphlets had been displaced by mephisto, and the first words that met the thief's eye in large letters on the back of a tract were these, "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."

Thomas Robinson looked at these words with a stupid gaze. At first he did not realise all that lay in them. He did not open the tract; he gazed benumbed at the words, and they glared at him like the eyes of green fire when we come in the dark on some tiger-cat crouching in his lair.

Oh, that I were a painter and could make you see what cannot be described—the features of this strange incident that sounds so small and was so great! The black night, the hat, the renegade peering under it in the wall's deep shadows to read something trashy, and the half-open lantern shooting its little strip of intense fire, and the grim words springing out in a moment from the dark face of night and dazzling the renegade's eyes and chilling his heart:

"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."

To his stupor now succeeded surprise and awe. "How comes this?" he whispered aloud; "was this a trick of ——'s? No! he doesn't know. This is the devil's own doing—no! it is not—more likely it is!—The third time!—I'll read it: my hands shake so I can hardly hold it. It is by him—yes—signed F. E. Heaven have mercy on me: this is more than natural."

He read it, shaking all over as he read. The tract was simply written. It began with a story of instances, some of them drawn from the histories of prisoners, and it ended with an earnest exhortation and a terrible warning. When the renegade came to this part, his heart beat violently; for along with the earnest, straightforward, unmincing words of sacred fire, there seemed to rise from the paper the eloquent voice, the eye rich with love, the face of inexhaustible intelligence and sympathy that had so often shone on Robinson, while just words such as these issued from those golden lips.

He read on, but not to the end; for as he read he came to one paragraph that made him fancy that Mr. Eden was by his very side. "You, into whose hands these words of truth shall fall, and find you intending to do some foolish or wicked thing to-morrow, or the next day, or to-day, or

this very hour—stop!—do not that sin! on your soul do it not!—fall on your knees and repent the sin you have meditated; better repent the base design than suffer for the sin, as suffer you shall so surely as the sky is pure, so surely as God is holy and sin's wages is death."

At these words, as if the priest's hand had been stretched across the earth and sea and laid on the thief's head, he fell down upon his knees with his back towards the scene of burglary and his face towards England, crying out, "I will, your reverence. I am!—Lord help me!" cried he, then first remembering how he had been told to pray in temptation's hour. The next moment he started to his feet, he dashed his lantern to the ground, and leaped over a gate that stood in his way, and fled down the road to Sydney.

He ran full half a mile before he stopped; his mind was in a whirl. Another reflection stopped him: he was a sentinel, and had betrayed his post; suppose his pals were to get into trouble through reckoning on him; was it fair to desert them without warning? What if he were to go back and give the whistle of alarm, pretend he had seen someone watching, and so prevent the meditated crime, as well as be guiltless of it himself; but then, thought he, "And suppose I do go back, what will become of me?"

While he hesitated, the question was decided for him. As he looked back irresolute, his keen eye noticed a shadow moving along the hedge-side to his left.

"Why, they are coming away," was his first thought; but looking keenly down the other edge, which was darker still, he saw another noiseless moving shadow. "Why are they on different sides of the road, and both keeping in the shadow?" thought this shrewd spirit, and he liked it so ill that he turned at once and ran off towards Sydney.

At this out came the two figures with a bound into the middle of the road, and with a loud view-halloo, raced after him like the wind.

Robinson, as he started, and before he knew the speed of his pursuers, ventured to run sideways a moment to see who or what they were. He caught a glimpse of white waistcoats and glittering studs, and guessed the rest.

He had a start of not more than twenty yards, but he was a good runner, and it was in his favour that his pursuers had come up at a certain speed, while he started fresh after a rest. He squared his shoulders, opened his

mouth wide for a long race, and ran as men run for their lives.

In the silent night Robinson's high-lows might have been heard half a mile off, clattering along the hard road. Pit-pit, pit-pat! came two pair of dress-boots after him. Robinson heard the sound with a thrill of fear; "They in their pumps and I in boots," thought he, and his pursuers heard the hunted one groan, and redoubled their efforts as dogs when the stag begins to sob.

He had scarce run a hundred yards, with his ears laid back like a hare's, when he could not help thinking the horrible pit pit pit got nearer; he listened with agonised keenness as he ran, and so fine did his danger make his ear that he could tell the exact position of his pursuers. A cold sweat crept over him as he felt they had both gained ten yards out of the twenty on him; then he distinctly felt one pursuer gain upon the other, and this one's pit pit pit crept nearer and nearer, an inch every three or four yards; the other held his own—no more—no less.

At last so near crept No. 1, that Robinson felt his hot breath at his ear. He clenched his teeth and gave a desperate spurt, and put four or five yards between them; he could have measured the ground gained by the pit pit pat. But the pursuer put on a spurt, and reduced the distance by half.

"I may as well give in," thought the hunted one—but at that moment came a gleam of hope; this pursuer began suddenly to pant very loud. He had clenched his teeth to gain the twenty yards; he had gained them but had lost his wind. Robinson heard this, and feared him no longer, and in fact after one or two more puffs came one despairing snort, and No. 1 pulled up dead short, thoroughly blown.

As No. 2 passed him, he just panted out, "Won't catch him."

"Won't I!" ejaculated No. 2, expelling the words rather than uttering them.

Klopetee klop, klopetee klop, klopetee, klopetee, klopetee klop.

Pit pat, pit pat, pit pat pat, pit pit pat. Ten yards apart, no more, no less.

"Nor nearer might the dog attain.
Nor farther might the quarry strain."

"They have done me between them," thought poor

Robinson. "I could have run from either singly, but one blows me, and then the other runs me down. I can get out of it by fighting, perhaps, but then there will be another crime."

Robinson now began to pant audibly, and finding he could not shake the hunter off, he with some reluctance prepared another game.

He began to exaggerate his symptoms of distress, and imperceptibly to relax his pace. On this the pursuer came up hand over head. He was scarce four yards behind, when Robinson suddenly turned and threw himself on one knee, with both hands out like a cat's claws. The man ran on full tilt; in fact, he could not have stopped. Robinson caught his nearest ankle with both hands, and rose with him, and lifted him, aided by his own impulse, high into the air and sent his heels up perpendicular. The man described a parabola in the air, and came down on the very top of his head with frightful force; and as he lay, his head buried in his hat and his heels kicking, Robinson, without a moment lost, jumped over his body, and klopetee klop rang fainter and fainter down the road alone.

The plucky pursuer wrenched his head with infinite difficulty out of his hat, which sat on his shoulders with his nose pointing through a chasm from crown to brim, shook himself, and ran wildly a few yards in pursuit—but finding he had in his confusion run away from Robinson as well as Robinson from him, and hopeless of recovering the ground now lost, he gave a rueful sort of laugh, made the best of it, put his hands in his pockets, and strolled back to meet No. 1.

Meantime, Robinson, fearful of being pursued on horseback, relaxed his speed but little, and ran the three miles out into Sydney. He came home with his flank beating and a glutinous moisture on his lip, and a hunted look in his eye. He crept into bed, but spent the night thinking, ay, and praying too, not sleeping.

CHAPTER L.

THOMAS ROBINSON rose from his sleepless bed an altered man—altered above all in this, that his self-confidence was clean gone. "How little I knew myself," said he, "and

how well his reverence knew me! I am the weakest fool on earth—he saw that and told me what to do. He provided help for me, and I, like an ungrateful idiot, never once thought of obeying him; but from this hour I see myself as I am and as he used to call me—a clever fool. I can't walk straight without some honest man to hold by. Well, I'll have one, though I give up everything else in the world for it."

Then he went to his little box and took out the letter to George Fielding. He looked at it and reproached himself for forgetting it so long. "A letter from the poor fellow's sweetheart too. I ought to have sent it by the post, if I did not take it. But I will take it. I'll ask Mr. Miles' leave the moment he comes home, and start that very day." Then he sat down and read the tract again, and as he read it was filled with shame and contrition.

By one of those freaks of mind which it is so hard to account for, every good feeling rushed upon him with far greater power than when he was in —— Prison, and strange to say he now loved his reverence more and took his words deeper to heart than he had done when they were together. His flesh crept with horror at the thought that he had been a criminal again, at least in intention, and that but for Heaven's mercy he would have been taken and punished with frightful severity; and, above all, would have wounded his reverence to the heart in return for more than mortal kindness, goodness, and love. And, to do Robinson justice, this last thought made his heart sicken and his flesh creep more than all the rest. He was like a man who had fallen asleep on the brink of an unseen precipice—awoke—and looked down.

The penitent man said his prayers this morning, and vowed on his knees humility and a new life. Henceforth he would know himself; he would not attempt to guide himself; he would just obey his reverence: and to begin, whenever a temptation came in sight, he would pray against it then and there, and fly from it, and the moment his master returned, he would leave the town and get away to honest George Fielding with his passport—Susan's letter.

With these prayers and these resolutions a calm complacency stole over him; he put his reverence's tract and George's letter in his bosom and came down into the kitchen.

The first person he met was the housemaid Jenny. "Oh, here is my lord!" cried she. "Where were you last night?"

Robinson stammered out, "Nowhere in particular. Why?"

"Oh, because the master was asking for you, and you weren't to be found high or low."

"What, is he come home?"

"Came home last night."

"I'll go and take him his hot water."

"Why, he is not in the house, stupid. He dressed the moment he came home and went out to a party. He swore properly at your not being in the way to help him dress."

"What did he say?" asked Robinson, a little uneasy.

The girl's eyes twinkled. "He said, 'How ever am I to lace myself now that scamp is not in the way?'"

"Come, none of your chaff, Jenny."

"Why, you know you do lace him, and pretty tight too."

"I do nothing of the kind."

"Oh, of course you won't tell on one another. Tell me our head-scamp does not wear stays! A man would not be as broad-shouldered as that, and have a waist like a wasp and his back like a board without a little lacing, and a good deal too."

"Well, have it your own way, Jenny. Won't you give me a morsel of breakfast?"

"Well, Tom, I can give you some just for form's sake; but, bless you, you won't be able to eat it."

"Why not?"

"Gents that are out all night bring a headache home in the morning in place of an appetite."

"But I was not out all night. I was at home soon after twelve."

"Really?"

"Really!"

"Tom!"

"Well, Jane!"

"Those that ain't clever enough to hide secrets should trust them to those that are."

"I don't know what you mean, my lass."

"Oh, nothing; only I sat up till half-past one in the kitchen, and I listened till three in my room."

"You took a deal of trouble on my account."

"Oh, it was more curiosity than regard," was the keen reply.

"So I should say."

The girl coloured and seemed nettled by this answer. She set demurely about the work of small vengeance. "Now," said she with great cordiality, "you tell me what you were doing all night, and why you broke into the house like a—a—hem! instead of coming into it like a man, and then you'll save me the trouble of finding it out whether you like or not." These words chilled Robinson. What! had a spy been watching him—perhaps for days—and above all a female spy—a thing with a velvet paw, a noiseless step, an inscrutable countenance, and a microscopic eye?

He hung his head over his cup in silence. Jenny's eye was scanning him. He felt that without seeing it. He was uneasy under it, but his self-reproach was greater than his uneasiness.

At this juncture the street door was opened with a latch-key. "Here comes the head-scamp," said Jenny with her eye on Robinson. The next moment a bell was rung sharply. Robinson rose.

"Finish your breakfast," said Jenny; "I'll answer the bell," and out she went. She returned in about ten minutes with a dressing-gown over her arm and a pair of curling-irons in her hand. "There," said she, "you are to go in the parlour, and get up the young buck; curl his nob and whiskers. I wish it was me; I'd curl his ear the first thing I'd curl."

"What! Jane, did you take the trouble to bring them down for me?"

"They look like it," replied the other tartly, as if she repented the good office.

Robinson went in to his master. He expected a rebuke for being out of the way; but no! he found the young gentleman in excellent humour and high spirits.

"Help me off with this coat, Tom."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, not so rough, confound you. Ah! ugh!"

"Coat's a little too tight, sir."

"No, it isn't—it fits me like a glove; but I am stiff and sore. There, now, get me a shirt."

Robinson came back with the shirt, and aired it close to the fire; and this being a favourable position for saying what he felt awkward about, he began.

"Mr. Miles, sir."

"Hollo!"

"I am going to ask you a favour."

"Out with it!"

"You have been a kind master to me."

"I should think I have, too. By Jove, you won't find such another in a hurry."

"No, sir, I am sure I should not, but there is an opening for me of a different sort altogether. I have a friend, a squatter, near Bathurst, and I am to join him if you will be so kind as to let me go."

"What an infernal nuisance!" cried the young gentleman, who was, like most boys, good-natured and selfish. "The moment I get a servant I like, he wants to go to the devil."

"Only to Bathurst, sir," said Robinson deprecatingly, to put him in a good humour.

"And what am I to do for another?"

At this moment in came Jenny with all the paraphernalia of breakfast. "Here, Jenny," cried he, "here's Robinson wants to leave us. Stupid ass!"

Jenny stood transfixed with the tray in her hand. "Since when?" asked she of her master, but looking at Robinson.

"This moment. The faithful creature greeted my return with that proposal."

"Well, sir, a servant isn't a slave, and I suppose he has a reason?"

"Oh! they have always got a reason, such as it is. Wants to go and squat at Bathurst. Well, Tom, you are a fool for leaving us, but of course we shan't pay you the compliment of keeping you against your will, shall we?" looking at Jane.

"What have I to do with it?" replied she, opening her gray eyes. "What is it to me whether he goes or stays?"

"Come, I like that. Why, you are the housemaid and he is the footman, and those two, we know, are always ——" and the young gentleman eked out his meaning by whistling a tune.

"Mr. Miles," said Jenny very gravely, like an elder rebuking a younger, "you must excuse me, sir, but I advise you not to make so free with your servants. Servants are encroaching, and they will be sure to take liberties with you in turn; and," turning suddenly red and angry, "if you talk like that to me, I shall leave the room."

"Well, if you must, you must; but bring the tea-kettle back with you. That is a duck!"

Jenny could not help laughing, and went for the tea-kettle. On her return Robinson made signals to her over her master's head, which he had begun to frizz. At first she looked puzzled, but following the direction of his eye, she saw that her master's right hand was terribly cut and swollen. "Oh!" cried the girl. "Oh dear! oh dear!"

"Eh?" cried Mr. Miles, "what is the row?"

"Look at your poor hand, sir!"

"Oh ay! isn't it hideous? Met with an accident. Soon get well."

"No, it won't, not of itself; but I have got a capital lotion for bruises, and I shall bathe it for you."

Jenny brought in a large basin of warm water, and began to foment it first, touching it so tenderly. "And his hand, that was as white as a lady's," said Jenny pitifully, "po-o-r bo-y!" This kind expression had no sooner escaped her than she coloured and bent her head down over her work, hoping it might escape notice.

"Young woman," said Mr. Miles with paternal gravity, "servants are advised not to make too free with their masters, or the beggars will forget their place and take liberties with you. He! he! he!"

Jenny put his hand quietly down into the water, and got up and ran across the room for the door. Her course was arrested by a howl from the jocose youth.

"Murder! Take him off, Jenny; kick him; the beggar is curling and laughing at the same time. Confound you! can't you lay the irons down when I say a good thing? Ha! ha! ha!"

This strange trio chuckled a space, Miles the loudest. "Tom, pour out my tea; and you, Jenny, if you will come to the scratch again—ha! ha! I'll tell you how I came by this."

This promise brought the inquisitive Jenny to the basin directly.

"You know Hazeltine?"

"Yes, sir, a tall gentleman that comes here now and then. That is the one you are to run a race with on the public course," put in Jenny, looking up with scandalised air.

"That is the boy; but how the deuce did you know?"

"Gentlemen to run with all the dirty boys looking on like

horses," remonstrated the grammatical one, "it is a disgrace."

"So it is—for the one that is beat. Well, I was to meet Hazeltine to supper out of town. By the bye, you don't know Tom Yates?"

"Oh," said Jenny, "I have heard of him too."

"I doubt that; there are a good many of his name."

"The rake I mean lives a mile or two out of Sydney."

"So do half a dozen more of them."

"This one is about the biggest gambler and sharper unhung."

"All right! that is my friend! Well, he gave us a thundering supper—lots of lush."

"What is lush?"

"Tea and coffee and barley-water, my dear. Oh, can't you put the thundering irons down when I say a good thing? Well, I mustn't be witty any more, the penalty is too severe."

I need hardly say it was not Mr. Miles' jokes that agitated Robinson now; on the contrary, in the midst of his curiosity and rising agitation, these jokes seemed ghastly impossibilities.

"Well, at ten o'clock we went upstairs to a snug little room, and all four sat down to a nice little green table."

"To gamble?"

"No! to whist; but now comes the fun. We had been playing about four hours, and the room was hot, and Yates was gone for a fresh pack, and old Hazeltine was gone into the drawing-room to cool himself. Presently he comes back and he says in a whisper, 'Come here, old fellows.' We went with him to the drawing-room and at first sight we saw nothing, but presently flash came a light right in our eyes; it seemed to come from something glittering in the field. And these flashes kept coming and going. At last we got the governor, and he puzzled over it a little while. 'I know what it is,' cried he, 'it is my cucumber glass.'"

Jenny looked up. "Glass might glitter," said she, "but I don't see how it could flash."

"No more did we, and we laughed in the governor's face; for all that, we were wrong. 'There is somebody under that wall with a dark lantern,' said Tom Yates, 'and every now and then the glass catches the glare, and reflects it this way.' 'Solomon!' cried the rest of us. The fact is, Jenny, when Tom Yates gets half-drunk he develops

sagacity more than human." (Robinson gave a little groan.) "Aha!" cried Miles, "the beggar has burnt his finger. I'm glad of it. Why should I be the only sufferer by his thundering irons? 'Here is a lark,' said I; 'we'll nab this dark lantern, won't we, Hazy?' 'Rather,' said Hazy. 'Wait till I get my pistols, and I'll give you a cutlass, George,' says Tom Yates. I forget who George was, but he said he was of noble blood, and I think myself he was some relation to the king of trumps, the whole family came about him so—mind my hair now. 'Oh, bother your artillery,' said I. 'Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just.' When I'm a little cut you may know it by my quoting Shakespeare. When I'm sober I don't remember a word of him—and don't want to."

"No, the *Sporting Magazine,* that is your Bible, sir," suggested Jenny.

"Yes, and let me read it without your commentary—mind my hair now. Where was I! Oh! Hazeltine and I opened the door softly, and whipped out, but the beggar was too sharp for us. No doubt he heard the door. Anyway, before we could get through the shrubbery he was off, and we heard him clattering down the road ever so far off. However, we followed quietly on the grass by the roadside at a fair travelling pace, and by and by, what do you think? Our man had pulled up in the middle of the road and stood stock still. 'That is a green trick,' thought I. However, before we could get up to him he saw us or heard us, and off down the road no end of a pace. 'Tally-ho!' cried I. Out came Hazy from the other hedge, and away we went—'Pug' ahead, 'Growler' and 'Gaylad' scarce twenty yards from his brush, and the devil take the hindmost. Well, of course we made sure of catching him in about a hundred yards—two such runners as Hazy and me——"

"And did not you?"

"I'll tell you. At first we certainly gained on him a few yards, but after that I could not near him. But Hazy put on a tremendous spurt, and left me behind for all I could do. 'Here is a go,' thought I, 'and I have backed myself for a hundred pounds in a half-mile race against this beggar.' Well, I was behind, but Hazy and the fox seemed to me to be joined together running, when all of a sudden—pouff! Hazy's wind and his pluck blew out together. He tailed off. Wasn't I pleased? 'Good-bye,

Hazy,' says I, as I shot by him and took up the running. Well, I tried all I knew; but this confounded fellow ran me within half a mile of Sydney (*N.B.*, within two miles of it). My throat and all my inside was like an oven, and I was thinking of tailing off too, when I heard the beggar puff and blow, so then I knew I must come up with him before long."

"And did you, sir?" asked Jenny in great excitement.

"Yes," said the other, "I passed him even."

"But did you catch him?"

"Well, why, yes, I caught him—as the Chinese caught the Tartar. This was one of your downy coves that are up to every move. When he found he hadn't legs to run from me, he slips back to meet me. Down he goes under my leg—I go blundering over him twenty miles an hour. He lifts me clear over his head, and I come flying down from the clouds heel over tip. I'd give twenty pounds to know how it was done, and fifty to see it done—to a friend. All I know is, that I should have knocked my own brains out if it had not been for my hat and my hand—they bore the brunt between them, as you see."

"And what became of the poor man?" asked Jane.

"Well, when the poor man had flung me over his head he ran on faster than ever, and by the time I had shaken my knowledge-box and found out north from south, I heard the poor man's nailed shoes clattering down the road. To start again a hundred yards behind a poor man who could run like that would have been making a toil of trouble, so I trotted back to meet Hazy."

"Well, I am glad he got off clear—ain't you, Tom?"

"Yes—no. A scoundrel that hashed the master like this!—why, Jane, you must be mad!"

"Spare your virtuous indignation," said the other coolly. "Remember I had been hunting him like a wild beast till his heart was nearly broke, and, when I was down, he could easily have revenged himself by giving me a kick with his heavy shoes on the head or the loins, that would have spoiled my running for a month of Sundays. What do you say to that?"

Robinson coloured. "I say you are very good to make excuses for an unfortunate man—for a rascal—that is to say, a burglar; a——"

"And how do you know he was all that?" asked Jenny very sharply.

"Why did he run if he was not guilty?" inquired Robinson cunningly.

"Guilty—what of?" asked Jenny.

"That is more than I can tell you," replied Robinson.

"I daresay," said Jenny, "it was some peaceable man that took fright at seeing two wild young gentlemen come out like mad bulls after him."

"When I have told you my story you will be better able to judge."

"What, isn't the story ended?"

"Ended! The cream of it is coming."

"Oh, sir," cried Jenny, "please don't go on till I come back. I am going for the cold lotion now; I have fomented it enough."

"Well, look sharp then—here is the other all in a twitter with excitement."

"Me, sir? No—yes. I am naturally interested."

"Well, you haven't been long. I don't think I want any lotion; the hot water has done it a good deal of good."

"This will do it more."

"But do you know it is rather a bore to have only one hand to cut bread and butter with?"

"I'll cut it, sir," said Robinson, laying down his irons for a moment.

"How long shall you be, Jenny?" asked Mr. Miles.

"I shall have done by when your story is done," replied she coolly.

Mr. Miles laughed. "Well, Jenny," said he, "I hadn't walked far before I met Hazeltine. 'Have you got him?' says he. 'Do I look like it?' said I rather crustily. Fancy a fool asking me whether I had got him! So I told him all about it, and we walked back together. By and by we met the other two just outside the gate. Well, just as we were going in, Tom Yates said, 'I say, suppose we look round the premises before we go to bed.' We went softly round the house, and what did we find but a window with the glass taken out; we poked about, and we found a pair of shoes. 'Why, there's someone in the house,' said Tom Yates, 'as I'm a sinner.' So we held a council of war. Tom was to go into the kitchen, lock the door leading out, and ambush in the larder with his pistols: and we three were to go in by the front door and search the house. Well, Hazeltine and I had got within a yard or two of it, and the knave of trumps in the rear with a sword or

something, when, by George, sir, the door began to open, and out slips a fellow quietly. Long Hazy and I went at him, Hazy first. Crack he caught Hazy on the head with a bludgeon, down went daddy-long-legs, and I got entangled in him, and the robber cut like the wind for the kitchen. 'Come on,' shouted I to the Hon. Thingumbob—bother his name—there—the knave of trumps, and I pulled up Hazy but couldn't wait for him, and after the beggar like mad. Well, as I came near the kitchen-door I heard a small scrimmage, and back comes my man flying, bludgeon in one hand and knife in the other, both whirling over his head like a windmill. I kept cool, doubled my right, and put in a heavy one from the armpit, you know, Tom; caught him just under the chin; you might have heard his jaw crack a mile off; down goes my man on his back flat on the bricks, and his bludgeon rattled one way and his knife the other—such a lark! Oh! oh! oh! what are you doing, Robinson? you hurt me most confoundedly—I won't tell you any more. So now he was down, in popped the knave of swords and fell on him, and Hazy came staggering in after and insulted him a bit, and we bagged him."

"And the other, sir," asked Tom, affecting an indifferent one; "he didn't get off, I hope?"

"What other?" inquired Jenny.

"The other unfort—the other rascal—the burglar."

"Why, he never said there were two."

"Y—yes!—he said they found their shoes."

"No, he said he found a pair of shoes."

"For all that, you are wrong, Jenny, and he is right—there were two; and what is more, Tom Yates had got the other, threatening to blow out his brains if he moved; so down he sat on the dresser, and took it quite easy, and whistled a tune while he trussed the other beggar with his own bludgeon and our chokers. Tom Yates says the cool one tumbled down from upstairs just as we drove our one in. Tom let them try the door before he bounced out; then my one flung a chair at Tom's head and cut back, Tom nailed the other and I floored mine—hurrah!"

Through this whole narrative Robinson had coolly and delicately to curl live hair with a beating heart, and to curl the very man who was relating all the time how he had hunted him and caught his comrades. Meantime a shrewd woman there listening with all her ears, a woman,

too, who had certain vague suspicions about him, and had taken him up rather sharper than natural, he thought, when, being off his guard for a moment, he anticipated the narrator and assumed there were two burglars in the house.

Tom, therefore, though curious and anxious, shut his face and got on his guard, and it was with an admirable imitation of mere sociable curiosity that he inquired, "And what did the rascals say for themselves?"

"What could they say?" said Jenny; "they were caught in the act."

"To do them justice, they did not speak of themselves, but they said three or four words too—very much to the point."

"How interesting it is!" cried Jenny—"what about?"

"Well, it was about your friend."

"My friend?"

"The peaceable gentleman the two young ruffians had chased down the road."

"Oh, he was one of them," said Jane, "that is plain enough now, in course. What did they say about him?"

"'Sold!' says my one to Tom's. 'And no mistake,' says Tom's. Oh, they spoke out; took no more notice of us four than if we had no ears. Then says mine, 'What do you think of *your* pal now?' and what do you think Tom's answered, Jenny?—it was rather a curious answer —*multum in parvo,* as we say at school, and one that makes me fear there is a storm brewing for our mutual friend, the peaceable gentleman—Jenny—*alias* the downy runner."

"Why, what did he say?"

"He said, 'I think he won't be alive this day week!'"

"The wretches!"

"No! you don't see—they thought he had betrayed them."

"But of course you undeceived them, sir," said Robinson.

"No, I didn't. Why, you precious greenhorn, was that our game?"

"Well, sir," cried Robinson cheerfully, "anyway it was a good night's work. The only thing vexes me," added he, with an intense air of mortification, "is that the worst scoundrel of the lot got clear off; that is a pity—a downright pity."

"Make your mind easy," replied Mr. Miles calmly; "he won't escape; we shall have him before the day is out."

"Will you, sir? that is right—but how?"

"The Hon. Thingumbob, Tom Yates' friend, put us up to it. We sent the pair down to Sydney in the brake, and we put Yates' groom (he is a ticket-of-leave) in with them, and a bottle of brandy, and he is to condole with them and have a guinea if they let out the third man's name, and they will—for they are bitter against him."

Robinson sighed.

"What is the matter?" said his master, trying to twist his head round.

"Nothing! only I am afraid they—they won't split; fellows of that sort don't split on a comrade where they can get no good by it."

"Well, if they don't, still we shall have him. One of us saw his face."

"Ah!"

"It was the Hon. —— the knave of trumps. Whilst Yates was getting the arms, Trumps slipped out by the garden gate and caught a glimpse of our friend; he saw him take the lantern up and fling it down and run. The light fell full on his face and he could swear to it out of a thousand. So the net is round our friend, and we shall have him before the day is out."

"Dring-a-dong-dring" (a ring at the bell).

"Have you done, Tom?"

"Just one turn more, sir."

"Then, Jenny, you see who that is!"

Jenny went, and returned with an embossed card, "It is a young gentleman—moustache and lavender gloves; oh, such a buck!"

"Who can it be?—the 'Hon. George Lascelles'? Why, that is the very man. I remember he said he would do himself the honour to call on me. That is the knave of trumps. Go down directly, Robinson, and tell him I'm at home, and bring him up."

"Yes, sir!"

"Yes, sir! Well, then, why don't you go?"

"Um! perhaps Jenny will go while I clear these things away;" and without waiting for an answer, Robinson hastened to encumber himself with the tea-tray, and flung the loaf and curling-irons into it, and bustled about and showed a sudden zeal lest this bachelor's room should appear

in disorder; and as Jenny mounted the front-stairs followed by the sprig of nobility, he plunged, heavily laden, down the back-stairs into the kitchen, and off with his coat, and cleaned knives like a mad thing.

"Oh, if I had but a pound in my pocket," thought he; "I would not stay another hour in Sydney. I'd get my ring and run for Bathurst and never look behind me. How comfortable and happy I was until I fell back into the old courses, and now see what a life mine has been ever since! What a twelve hours! hunted like a wild beast, suspected and watched by my fellow-servant, and forced to hide my thoughts from this one, and my face from that one; but I deserve it, and I wish it was ten times as bad. Oh, you fool—you idiot—you brute! it is not the half of what you deserve. I ask but one thing of Heaven—that his reverence may never know: don't let me break that good man's heart; I'd much rather die before the day is out!"

At this moment Jenny came in. Robinson cleaned the poor knives harder still and did not speak; his cue was to find out what was passing in the girl's mind. But she washed her cup and saucer and plates in silence. Presently the bell rang.

"Tom!" said Jenny quietly.

"Would you mind going, Jenny?"

"Me! it is not my business."

"No, Jenny! but once in a way, if you will be so kind."

"Once! why, I have been twice to the door for you to-day. You to your place and I to mine. Shan't go!"

"Look at me with my coat off and covered with brick-dust."

"Put your coat on and shake the dust off."

"Oh, Jenny! that is not like you to refuse me such a trifle. I would not disoblige you so."

"I didn't refuse," said Jenny, making for the door; "I only said 'no' once or twice—*we* don't call that refusing;" but as she went out of the door she turned sharp as if to catch Robinson's face off its guard; and her gray eye dwelt on him with one of those demure, inexplicable looks her sex can give all *ab extra*, seeing all, revealing nothing.

She returned with her face on fire: "That is what I get for taking your place!"

"What is the matter?"

"That impudent young villain wanted to kiss me."

"Oh, is that all?"

"No! it is not all; he said I was the prettiest girl in Sydney" (with an appearance of rising indignation).

"Well, but, Jenny, that is no news; I could have told him that."

"Then why did you never tell me?"

"I thought by your manner you knew it."

Having tried to propitiate the foe thus, Robinson lost no more time, but went upstairs and asked Mr. Miles for the trifle due to him as wages. Mr. Miles was very sorry, but he had been cleaned out at his friend Yates'—had not a shilling left and no hopes of any for a fortnight to come.

"Then, sir," said Robinson doggedly, "I hope you will allow me to go into the town and try and make a little for myself, just enough to pay my travelling expenses."

"By all means," was the reply; "tell me if you succeed, and I'll borrow a sovereign of you."

Out went Robinson into the town of Sydney. He got into a respectable street and knocked at a good house with a green door. He introduced himself to the owner as a first-rate painter and engrainer, and offered to turn this door into a mahogany, walnut, oak, or what-not door. "The house is beautiful, all but the door," said sly Tom; "it is blistered."

"I am quite content with it as it is," was the reply in a rude, supercilious tone.

Robinson went away discomfited; he went doggedly down the street begging them all to have their doors beautified, and wincing at every refusal. At last he found a shopkeeper who had no objection, but doubted Robinson's capacity.

"Show me what can you do," said he slily, "and then I'll talk to you."

"Send for the materials," replied the artist, "and give me a board, and I'll put half a dozen woods on the face of it."

"And pray," said the man, "why should I lay out my money in advertising you? No! you bring me a specimen, and if it is all right I'll give you the job."

"That is a bargain," replied Robinson, and went off. "How hard they make honesty to a poor fellow," muttered he bitterly, "but I'll beat them," and he clenched his teeth.

He went to a pawnbroker and pawned the hat off his head—it was a new one; then for a halfpenny he bought

a sheet of brown paper and twisted it into a workman's cap; he bought the brushes and a little paint and a little varnish, and then he was without a penny again. He went to a wheelwright's and begged the loan of a small, valueless, worm-eaten board he saw kicking about, telling him what it was for. The wealthy wheelwright eyed him with scorn.

"Should I ever see it again?" asked he ironically.

"Keep it for your coffin," said Robinson fiercely, and passed on. "How hard they make honesty to a poor fellow! I was a fool for asking for it when I might have taken it. What was there to hinder me? Honesty, my lass, you are bitter."

Presently he came to the suburbs, and there was a small wooden cottage. The owner, a common labourer, was repairing it as well as he could. Robinson asked him very timidly if he could spare a couple of square feet off a board he was sawing.

"What for?"

Robinson showed his paint-pot and brushes, and told him how he was at a standstill for want of a board. "It is only a loan of it I ask," said he.

The man measured the plank carefully, and after some hesitation cut off a good piece. "I can spare that much," said he; "poor folk should feel for one another."

"I'll bring it back, you may depend," said Robinson.

"You needn't trouble," replied the labouring man with a droll wink, as much as to say, "Gammon!"

When Robinson returned to the sceptical shopkeeper with a board on which oak, satin-wood, walnut, etc., were imitated to the life in squares, that worthy gave a start and betrayed his admiration, and Robinson asked him five shillings more than he would if the other had been more considerate. In short, before evening the door was painted a splendid imitation of walnut-wood, the shopkeeper was enchanted, and Robinson had fifteen shillings handed over to him. He ran and got Mr. Eden's ring out of pawn, and kissed it, and put it on; next he liberated his hat. He slept better this night than the last. "One more such day and I shall have enough to pay my expenses to Bathurst."

He turned out early and went into the town. He went into the street where he had worked last evening, and when he came near his door there was a knot of persons

round it. Robinson joined them. Presently one of the shop-boys cried out, "Why, here he is; this is the painter!"

Instantly three or four hands were laid on Robinson.

"Come and paint my door."

"No, come and paint mine!"

"No, mine!"

Tom had never been in such request since he was an itinerant quack. His sly eye twinkled, and this artist put himself up to auction then and there. He was knocked down to a tradesman in the same street—twenty-one shillings the price of this door (mock mahogany). While he was working, commissions poured in, and Robinson's price rose, the demand for him being greater than the supply. The mahogany door was really a *chef-d'œuvre*. He came home triumphant with thirty shillings in his pocket, he spread them out on the kitchen-table and looked at them with a pride and a thrill of joy money never gave him before. He had often closed the shutters and furtively spread out twice as many sovereigns, but they were only his; those shillings were his own. And they were not only his own, but his own by labour. Each sacred shilling represented so much virtue, for industry is a virtue. He looked at them with a father's pride.

"How sweet the butter our own hands have churned!"—T. T.

He blessed his reverend friend for having taught him an art in a dung-hole where idiots and savages teach crank. He blessed his reverence's four bones, his favourite imprecation of the benevolent kind. I conclude the four bones meant the arms and legs; if so, it would have been more to the point had he blessed the fifth—the skull.

Jenny came in and found him gloating over his virtuous shillings. She stared. He told her what he had been about these two days past, his difficulties, his success, the admiration his work excited throughout the capital (he must exaggerate a little or it would not be Tom Robinson), and the wealth he was amassing.

Jenny was glad to hear this, very glad, but she scolded him well for pawning his hat. "Why didn't you ask me?" said she; "I would have lent you a pound, or even two, or given them you for any *honest* purpose." And Jenny pouted, and got up a little quarrel.

The next day a gentleman caught Robinson and made

him paint two doors in his fancy villa. Satin-wood this time; and he received three pounds three shillings, a good dinner, and what Bohemians all adore—praise. Now as he returned in the evening a sudden misgiving came to him. "I have not thought once of Bathurst to-day. I see—all this money-making is a contrivance to keep me in Sydney. It is absurd my coining paint at this rate. I see your game, my lad; either I am to fall into bad company again, or to be split upon and nabbed for that last job. To-morrow I will be on the road to Bathurst. I can paint there just as well as here; besides, I have got my orders from his reverence to go, and I'll go."

He told Jane his resolution: she made no answer. While these two were sitting cosily by the fireside, for since Robinson took to working hard all day he began to relish the hearth at night, suddenly cheerful, boisterous voices, and Mr. Miles and two friends burst in, and would have an extempore supper, and nothing else would serve these libertines but mutton-chops off the gridiron. So they invaded the kitchen. Out ran Jenny to avoid them—or put on a smarter cap; and Robinson was to cut the chops, and lay a cloth on the dresser and help cook. While his master went off to the cellar, the two rakes who remained chattered and laughed both pretty loud. They had dined together, and the bottle had not stood still.

"I have heard that voice before," thought Robinson. "It is a very peculiar voice. Whose voice is that?"

He looked the gentleman full in the face, and could hardly suppress a movement of surprise.

The gentleman by the instinct of the eye caught his, and his attention was suddenly attracted to Robinson, and from that moment his eye was never off Robinson, following him everywhere. Robinson affected not to notice this; the chops were grilling, Jenny came in and bustled about and pretended not to hear the side-compliments of the libertines. Presently the young gentleman with the peculiar voice took out his pocket-book and said, "I have a bet to propose. I'll bet you fifty pounds I find the man you two hunted down the road on Monday night."

"No takers," replied Mr. Hazeltine with his mouth full.

"Stop a bit. I don't care if I make a time bet," said Miles. "How soon will you bet you catch him?"

"In half an hour," was the cool reply.

And the Hon. George while making it managed at the

same time, in a sauntering sort of way, to put himself between Robinson and the door that led out into the garden. Robinson eyed him in silence and never moved.

"In half an hour. That is a fair bet," said Mr. Miles. "Shall I take him?"

"Better not; he is a knowing one. He has seen him to earth somewhere, or he would not offer you such a bet."

"Well, I'll bet you five to three," proposed the Hon. George.

"Done!"

"Done!"

Robinson put in a hasty word: "And what is to become of Thimble-rig Jem, sir?" These words, addressed to Mr. Lascelles, produced a singular effect. That gentleman gave an immediate shiver as if a bullet had passed clean through him and out again, then opened his eyes and looked first at one door, then at the other, as if hesitating which he should go by. Robinson continued, addressing him with marked respect, "What I mean, sir, is that there is a Government reward of two hundred pounds for Thimble-rig Jem, and the police wouldn't like to be drawn away from two hundred pounds after a poor fellow like him you saw on Monday night, one that is only suspected, and no reward offered. Now, Jem is a notorious culprit."

"Who is this Jem, my man? What is he?" asked Mr. Lascelles with a composure that contrasted remarkably with this late emotion.

"A convict escaped from Norfolk Island, sir; an old offender. I fell in with him once. He has forgotten me, I daresay, but I never forget a man. They say he has grown a moustache and whiskers, and passes himself off for a nob; but I could swear to him."

"How? By what?" cried Mr. Miles.

"If he should ever be fool enough to get in my way——"

"Hang Thimble-rig Jem," cried Hazeltine. "Is it a bet, Lascelles?"

"What?"

"That you nab our one in half an hour?"

Mr. Lascelles affected an aristocratic drawl: "No, I was joking. I couldn't afford to leave the fire for thirty pounds. Why should I run after the poor dayvil? Find him yourselves. He never annoyed me. Got a cigar, Miles?"

After their chops, etc., the rakes went off to finish the night elsewhere.

"There, they are gone at last! Why, Jenny, how pale you look!" said Robinson, not seeing the colour of his own cheek. "What is wrong?"

Jenny answered by sitting down and bursting out crying. Tom sat opposite her with his eyes on the ground. "Oh, what I have gone through this day!" cried Jenny. "Oh! oh! oh! oh!" sobbing convulsively.

What could Tom do but console her? And she found it so agreeable to be consoled that she prolonged her distress. An impressionable Bohemian on one side a fire-place, and a sweet, pretty girl crying on the other, what wonder that two o'clock in the morning found this pair sitting on the same side of the fire aforesaid, her hand in his?

The next morning at six o'clock Jenny was down to make his breakfast for him before starting. If she had said, "Don't go," it is to be feared the temptation would have been too strong, but she did not; she said sorrowfully, "You are right to leave this town." She never explained. Tom never heard from her own lips how far her suspicions went. He was a coward, and seeing how shrewd she was, was afraid to ask her; and she was one of your natural ladies, who can leave a thing unsaid out of delicacy.

Tom Robinson was what Jenny called "capital company." He had won her admiration by his conversation, his stories of life, and now and then a song, and by his good looks and good-nature. She disguised her affection admirably until he was in danger and about to leave her, and then she betrayed herself. If she was fire, he was tow. At last it came to this: "Don't you cry so, dear girl. I have got a question to put to you—IF I COME BACK A BETTER MAN THAN I GO, WILL YOU BE MRS. ROBINSON?"

"Yes."

CHAPTER LI.

ROBINSON started for Bathurst. Just before he got clear of the town he passed the poor man's cottage who had lent him the board. "Bless me, how came I to forget him?" said he. At that moment the man came out to go to work. "Here I am," said Robinson, meeting him full, "and here is your board;" showing it to him painted in squares. "Can't afford to give it you back—it is my advertisement. But here is half-a-crown for it, and for your trusting me."

"Well, to be sure," cried the man. "Now, who'd have thought this? Why, if the world is not turning honest! But half-a-crown is too much; 'taint worth the half of it."

"It was worth five pounds to me. I got employment through it. Look here," and he showed him several pounds in silver; "all this came from your board; so take your half-crown and my thanks on the head of it."

The half-crown lay in the man's palm; he looked in Robinson's face. "Well," cried he with astonishment, "you are the honestest man ever I fell in with."

"I am the honesetst man! You will go to heaven for saying those words to me," cried Robinson warmly and with agitation. "Good-bye, my good, charitable soul; you deserve ten times what you have got," and Robinson made off.

The other, as soon as he recovered the shock, shouted after him, "Good-bye, honest man, and good luck wherever you go."

And Robinson heard him scuttle about and hastily convene small boys and despatch them down the road to look at an honest man. But the young wood did not kindle at his enthusiasm. Had the rarity been a bear with a monkey on him, well and good.

"I'm pretty well paid for a little honesty," thought Robinson. He stepped gallantly out in high spirits, and thought of Jenny, and fell in love with her, and saw in her affection yet another inducement to be honest and industrious. Nothing of note happened on his way to Bathurst, except that one day, as he was tramping along very hot and thirsty, a luscious prickly pear hung over a wall, and many a respectable man would have taken it without scruple; but Tom was so afraid of beginning again, he turned his back on it, and ran on instead of walking, to make sure.

When he reached Bathurst, his purse was very low, and he had a good many more miles to go, and not feeling quite sure of his welcome, he did not care to be penniless, so he went round the town with his advertising-board, and very soon was painting doors in Bathurst. He found the natives stingier here than in Sydney, and they had a notion a traveller like him ought to work much cheaper than an established man; but still he put by something every day.

He had been three days in the town when a man stepped

up to him as he finished a job and asked him to go home with him. The man took him to a small but rather neat shop—plumber's, glazier's, and painter's.

"Why, you don't want me," said Robinson; "we are in the same line of business."

"Step in," said the man. In a few words he let Robinson know that he had a great bargain to offer him. "I am going to sell the shop," said he. "It is a business I never much fancied, and I had rather sell it to a stranger than to a Bathurst man, for the trade have offended me. There is not a man in the colony can work like you, and you may make a little fortune here."

Robinson's eyes sparkled a moment, then he replied, "I am too poor a man to buy a business. What do you want for it?"

"Only sixty pounds for the articles in the shop and the good-will and all."

"Well, I daresay it is moderate, but how am I to find sixty pounds?"

"I'll make it as light as a feather. Five pounds down. Five pounds in a month; after that ten pounds a month till we are clear. Take possession and sell the goods, and work the good-will on payment of the first five."

"That is very liberal," said Robinson. "Well, give me till next Thursday, and I'll bring you the first five."

"Oh, I can't do that; I give you the first offer, but into the market it goes this evening, and no later."

"I'll call this evening and see if I can do it."

Robinson tried to make up the money, but it was not to be done. Then fell a terrible temptation upon him. Handling George Fielding's letter with his delicate fingers, he had satisfied himself there was a bank-note in it. Why not borrow this bank-note? The shop would soon repay it. The idea rushed over him like a flood. At the same moment he took fright at it—"Lord help me!" he ejaculated.

He rushed to a shop, bought two or three sheets of brown paper, and a lot of wafers. With nimble fingers he put the letter in one parcel, that parcel in another, that in another, and so on till there were a dozen envelopes between him and the irregular loan. This done, he confided the grand parcel to his landlord. "Give it me when I start."

He went no more near the little shop till he had made seven pounds; then he went. The shop and business had

been sold just twenty-four hours. Robinson groaned. "If I had not been so very honest! Never mind. I must take the bitter with the sweet."

For all that, the town became distasteful to him. He bought a cheap revolver, for there was a talk of bush-rangers in the neighbourhood, and started to walk to George Fielding's farm. He reached it in the evening. "There was no George Fielding here," was the news. "He left this more than six months ago."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Not I."

Robinson had to ask everybody he met where George Fielding was gone to. At last, by good luck, he fell in with George's friend M'Laughlan, who told him it was twenty-five miles off.

"Twenty-five miles? that must be for to-morrow, then."

M'Laughlan told him he knew George Fielding very well. "He is a fine lad." Then he asked Robinson what was his business. Robinson took down a very thin light board with ornamental words painted on it.

"That is my business," said he.

At the sight of a real business, the worthy Scot offered to take care of him for the night, and put him on the road to Fielding's next morning. Next morning Robinson painted his front-door as a return for bed and breakfast. M'Laughlan gave him somewhat intricate instructions for to-morrow's route. Robinson followed them and soon lost his way. He was set right again, but lost it again; and after a tremendous day's walk made up his mind he should have to camp in the open air and without his supper, when he heard a dog baying in the distance. "There is a house of some kind, anyway," thought Robinson, "but where? I see none; better make for the dog."

He made straight for the sound, but still he could not see any house. At last, however, coming over a hill, he found a house beneath him, and on the other side of this house the dog was howling incessantly. Robinson came down the hill, walked round the house, and there sat the dog on the steps. "Well, it is you for howling, anyway," said Robinson. "Anybody at home?" he shouted. No one answered, and the dog howled on. "Why, the place is deserted, I think. Haven't I seen that dog before? Why, it is Carlo! Here, Carlo, poor fellow, Carlo, what is the matter?"

The dog gave a little whimper as Robinson stooped and patted him, but no sign of positive recognition; but he pattered into the house. Robinson followed him, and there he found the man he had come to see, stretched on his bed, pale and hollow-eyed and grisly, and looking like a corpse in the fading light.

Robinson was awe-struck. "Oh, what is this?" said he, "have I come all this way to bury him?"

He leaned over him and felt his heart; it beat feebly but equably, and he muttered something unintelligible when Robinson touched him. Then Robinson struck a light, and right glad he was to find a caldron full of gelatinised beef-soup. He warmed some and ate a great supper, and Carlo sat and whimpered, and then wagged his tail, and plucked up more and more spirit, and finally recognised Tom all in a moment somehow, and announced the fact by one great disconnected bark and a saltatory motion. This done, he turned to and also ate a voracious supper. Robinson rolled himself up in George's greatcoat and slept like a top on the floor. Next morning he was waked by a tapping, and there was Carlo seated bolt upright with his tail beating the floor, because George was sitting up in the bed looking about him in a puzzled way. "Jacky," said he, "is that you?"

Robinson got up, rubbed his eyes and came towards the bed. George stared in his face and rubbed his eyes too, for he thought he must be under an ocular delusion.

"Who are you?"

"A friend."

"Well, I didn't think to see you under a roof of mine again."

"Just the welcome I expected," thought Robinson bitterly. He answered coldly: "Well, as soon as you are well you can turn me out of your house, but I should say you are not strong enough to do it just now."

"No, I am weak enough, but I am better—I could eat something."

"Oh, you could do that! What! even if I cooked it. Here goes, then."

Tom lit the fire and warmed some beef-soup. George ate some, but very little; however, he drank a great jugful of water—then dozed, and fell into a fine perspiration. It was a favourable crisis, and from that moment youth and a sound constitution began to pull him through; moreover, no assassin had been there with his lancet.

Behold the thief turned nurse! The next day, as he pottered about, clearing the room, opening or shutting the windows, cooking and serving, he noticed George's eye following him everywhere with a placid wonder, which at last broke into words.

"You take a deal of trouble about me."

"I do," was the dry answer.

"It is very good of you, but——"

"You would as lief it was anybody else; but your other friends have left you to die like a dog," said Robinson sarcastically. "Well, they left you when you were sick—I'll leave you when you are well."

"What for? Seems to me that you have earned a right to stay as long as you are minded. The man that stands by me in trouble I won't bid him go when the sun shines again."

And at this precise point in his sentence, without the least warning, Mr. Fielding ignited himself, and inquired with fury whether it came within Robinson's individual experience that George Fielding was of an ungrateful turn, or whether such was the general voice of fame——

"Now don't you get in a rage and burst your boiler," said Robinson. "Well, George, without joking though, I have been kind to you; not for nursing you—what Christian would not do that for his countryman and his old landlord sick in a desert? But what would you think of me if I told you I had come a hundred and sixty miles to bring you a letter? I wouldn't show it you before, for they say exciting them is bad for fever, but I think I may venture now. Here it is." And Robinson tore off one by one the twelve envelopes, to George's astonishment and curiosity. "There."

"I don't know the hand," said George. But opening the inclosure, he caught a glance of a hand he did know, and let everything else drop on the bed, while he held this and gazed at it, and the colour flushed into his white cheek. "Oh!" cried he, and worshipped it in silence again; then opened it and devoured it. First came some precious words of affection and encouragement. He kissed the letter. "You are a good fellow to bring me such a treasure, and I'll never forget it as long as I live!"

Then he went back to the letter. "There is something about you, Tom!"

"About me?"

"She tells me you never had a father—not to say a father——"

"She says true."

"Susan says that is a great disadvantage to any man, and so it is—and, poor fellow——"

"What?"

"She says they came between your sweetheart and you—oh, poor Tom!"

"What?"

"You lost your sweetheart; no wonder you went astray after that. What would become of me if I lost my Susan? And—ay, you were always better than me, Susan. She says she and I have never been sore tempted like you."

"Bless her little heart for making excuses for a poor fellow; but she was always a charitable, kind-hearted young lady."

"Wasn't she, Tom?"

"And what sweet eyes!"

"Ain't they, Tom? brimful of heaven, I call them."

"And when she used to smile on you, Master George, oh! the ivories."

"Now you take my hand this minute. How foolish I am! I can't see. Now you shall read it on to me because you brought it."

"'And you, George, that are as honest a man as ever lived, do keep him by you awhile, and keep him in the right way. He is well disposed, but weak—do it to oblige me.'"

"Will you stay with me, Tom?" inquired George, cheerful and business-like. "I am not a lucky man, but while I have a shilling there's sixpence for the man that brought me this—dew in the desert, I call it. And to think you have seen her since I have. How was she looking? had she her beautiful colour? what did she say to you with her own mouth?"

Then Robinson had to recall every word Susan had said to him; this done, George took the inclosure. "Stop, here is something for you. 'George Fielding is requested to give this to Robinson for the use of Thomas Sinclair.' There you are, Tom—well!—what is the matter?"

"Nothing. It is a name I have not heard a while. I did not know any creature but me knew it; is it glamour or what?"

"Why, Tom, what is the matter? don't look like that. Open it, and let us see what there is inside."

Robinson opened it, and there was the five-pound note for him, with this line, "If you have regained the name of Sinclair, keep it." Robinson ran out of the house, and walked to and fro in a state of exaltation. "I'm well paid for my journey; I'm well paid for not fingering that note! Who would not be honest if they knew the sweets? How could he know my name? Is he really more than man? Keep it! Will I not?"

CHAPTER LII.

THE old attachment was revived. Robinson had always a great regard for George, and after nursing and bringing him through a dangerous illness, this feeling doubled. And as for George, the man who had brought him a letter from Susan one hundred and sixty miles became such a benefactor in his eyes, that he thought nothing good enough for him. In a very few days George was about again and on his pony, and he and Robinson and Carlo went a-shepherding. One or two bullocks had gone to Jericho while George lay ill, and the poor fellow's heart was sore when he looked at his diminished substance and lost time. Robinson threw himself heart and soul into the business, and was of great service to George, but after a bit he found it a dull life.

George saw this, and said to him, "You would do better in a town. I should be sorry to lose you, but if you take my advice, you will turn your back on unlucky George, and try the paint-brush in Bathurst." For Robinson had told him all about it, and painted his front-door.

"Can't afford to part from Honesty," was the firm reply.

George breathed again. Robinson was a great comfort to the weak, solitary, and now desponding man. One day for a change they had a thirty-mile walk to see a farmer that had some beasts to sell a great bargain; he was going to boil them down if he could not find a customer. They found them all just sold. "Just my luck," said George.

They came home another way. Returning home, George was silent and depressed. Robinson was silent, but appeared to be swelling with some grand idea. Every now

and then he shot ahead under its influence. When they got home and were seated at supper, he suddenly put this question to George, "Did you ever hear of any gold being found in these parts?"

"No, never!"

"What, not in any part of the country?"

"No, never!"

"Well, that is odd!"

"I am afraid it is a very bad country for that."

"Ay, to make it in, but not to find it in."

"What do you mean?"

"George," said the other, lowering his voice mysteriously, "in our walk to-day we passed places that brought my heart into my mouth; for if this was only California, those places would be pockets of gold."

"But you see it is not California, but Australia, where all the world knows there is nothing of what your mind is running on."

"Don't say 'knows'; say 'thinks.' Has it ever been searched for gold?"

"I'll be bound it has; or if not, with so many eyes constantly looking on every foot of soil, a speck or two would have come to light."

"One would think so; but it is astonishing how blind folks are, till they are taught how to look, and where to look. 'Tis the mind that sees things, George, not the eye."

"Ah!" said George, with a sigh, "this chat puts me in mind of 'The Grove.' Do you mind how you used to pester everybody to go out to California?"

"Yes! and I wish we were there now."

"And all your talk used to be gold—gold—gold."

"As well say it as think it."

"That is true. Well, we shall be very busy all day to-morrow, but in the afternoon dig for gold an hour or two—then you will be satisfied."

"But it is no use digging here; it was full five-and-twenty miles from here, the likely-looking place."

"Then why didn't you stop me at the place?"

"Why?" replied Robinson sourly, "because his reverence did so snub me whenever I got upon that favourite topic, that I really had got out of the habit. I was ashamed to say, 'George, let us stop on the road and try for gold with our finger-nails.' I knew I should only get laughed at."

"Well," said George sarcastically, "since the gold-mine is twenty-five miles off, and our work is round about the door, suppose we pen sheep to-morrow, and dig for gold when there is nothing better to be done."

Robinson sighed. Unbucolical to the last degree was the spirit in which our Bohemian tended the flocks next morning. His thoughts were deeper than the soil. And every evening up came the old topic. Oh, how sick George got of it! At last one night he said, "My lad, I should like to tell you a story—but I suppose I shall make a bungle of it; shan't cut the furrow clean, I am doubtful."

"Never mind; try."

"Well, then. Once upon a time there was an old chap that had heard or read about treasures being found in odd places, a pot full of guineas or something; and it took root in his heart, till nothing would serve him but he must find a pot of guineas too. He used to poke about all the old ruins grubbing away, and would have taken up the floor of the church, but the churchwardens would not have it. One morning he comes down and says to his wife, 'It is all right, old woman; I've found the treasure.' 'No, have you though?' says she. 'Yes,' says he, 'leastways it is as good as found; it is only waiting till I've had my breakfast, and then I'll go out and fetch it in.' 'La, John, but how did you find it?' 'It was revealed to me in a dream,' says he as grave as a judge. 'And where is it?' asks the old woman. 'Under a tree in our own orchard—no farther,' says he. 'Oh, John! how long you are at breakfast to-day!' Up they both got and into the orchard. 'Now, which tree is it under?' John he scratches his head, 'Blest if I know.' 'Why, you old ninny,' says the mistress, 'didn't you take the trouble to notice?' 'That I did,' said he; 'I saw plain enough which tree it was in my dream, but now they muddle it all, there are so many of 'em. 'Drat your stupid old head,' says she, 'why didn't you put a nick on the right one at the time?'"

Robinson burst out laughing. George chuckled. "Oh," said he, "there were a pair of them for wisdom, you may take your oath of that. 'Well,' says he, 'I must dig till I find the right one.' The wife she loses heart at this; for there was eighty apple-trees, and a score of cherry-trees. 'Mind you don't cut the roots,' says she, and she heaves

a sigh. John he gives them bad language, root and branch. 'What signifies cut or not cut; the old faggots —they don't bear me a bushel of fruit the whole lot. They used to bear two sacks apiece in father's time. Drat 'em.' 'Well, John,' says the old woman, smoothing him down, 'father used to give them a deal of attention.' ''Taint that! 'taint that!' says he quick and spiteful like; 'they have got old like ourselves, and good for firewood.' Out pickaxe and spade, and digs three foot deep round one, and finding nothing but mould, goes at another, makes a little mound all round him too—no guinea-pot. Well, the village let him dig three or four quiet enough, but after that curiosity was awakened, and while John was digging, and that was all day, there was mostly seven or eight watching through the fence and passing their jests. After a bit a fashion came up of flinging a stone or two at John; then John he brought out his gun loaded with dust-shot along with his pick and spade, and the first stone came he fired sharp in that direction and then loaded again. So they took that hint, and John dug on in peace till about the fourth Sunday, and then the parson had a slap at him in church. 'Folks were not to heap up to themselves treasures on earth,' was all his discourse."

"Well, but," said Robinson, "this one was only heaping up mould."

"So it seemed when he had dug the five-score holes, for no pot of gold didn't come to light. Then the neighbours called the orchard 'Jacobs' Folly'; his name was Jacobs—John Jacobs. 'Now then, wife,' says he, 'suppose you and I look out for another village to live in, for their gibes are more than I can bear.' Old woman begins to cry. 'Been here so long—brought me home here, John, when we were first married, John, and I was a comely lass, and you the smartest young man I ever saw, to my fancy anyway; couldn't sleep or eat my victuals in any house but this.' 'Oh, couldn't ye? Well, then, we must stay; perhaps it will blow over.' 'Like everything else, John; but, dear John, do ye fill in those holes; the young folk come far and wide on Sundays to see them.' 'Wife, I haven't the heart,' says he. 'You see, when I was digging for the treasure I was always a-going to find, it kept my heart up; but take out shovel and fill them in, I'd as lief dine off white of egg on a Sunday.' So for six blessed months the heaps were out in the heat

and frost, till the end of February, and then, when the weather broke, the old man takes heart and fills them in, and the village soon forgot 'Jacobs' Folly' because it was out of sight. Comes April, and out burst the trees. 'Wife,' says he, 'our bloom is richer than I have known it this many a year, it is richer than our neighbours'.' Bloom dies, and then out come about a million little green things quite hard."

"Ay! ay!" said Robinson; "I see."

"Michaelmas Day the old trees were staggering and the branches down to the ground with the crop; thirty shillings on every tree, one with another; and so on for the next year, and the next; sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the year. Trees were old and wanted a change. His letting in the air to them, and turning the subsoil up to the frost and sun, had renewed their youth. So by that he learned that tillage is the way to get treasure from the earth. Men are ungrateful at times, but the soil is never ungrateful; it always makes a return for the pains we give it."

"Well, George," said Robinson, "thank you for your story; it is a very good one, and after it I'll never dig for gold in a garden. But now suppose a bare rock or an old river's bed, or a mass of shingles or pipeclay, would you dig or manure them for crops?"

"Why, of course not."

"Well, those are the sort of places in which nature has planted a yellower crop and a richer crop than tillage ever produced. And I believe there are plums of gold not thirty miles from here in such spots waiting only to be dug out."

"Well, Tom, I have wasted a parable, that is all. Good-night! I hope to sleep and be ready for a good day's work to-morrow. You shall dream of digging up gold here—if you like."

"I'll never speak of it again," said Robinson doggedly.

If you want to make a man a bad companion, interdict altogether the topic that happens to interest him. Robinson ceased to vent his chimera. So it swelled and swelled in his heart, and he became silent, absorbed, absent, and out of spirits. "Ah!" thought George, "poor fellow, he is very dull. He won't stay beside me much longer."

This conviction was so strong that he hesitated to close with an advantageous offer that came to him from

his friend, Mr. Winchester. That gentleman had taken a lease of a fine run some thirty miles from George. He had written George that he was to go and look at it, and if he liked it better than his own he was to take it. Mr. Winchester could make no considerable use of either for some time to come.

George hesitated. He felt himself so weak-handed with only Robinson, who might leave him, and a shepherd lad he had just hired. However, his hands were unexpectedly strengthened.

One day as the two friends were washing a sheep, an armed savage suddenly stood before them. Robinson dropped the sheep and stood on his defence, but George cried out, "No! no! it is Jacky! Why, Jacky, where on earth have you been?" And he came warmly towards him. Jacky fled to a small eminence and made warlike preparations. "You stop you a good while and I speak. Who you?"

"Who am I, stupid? Why, who should I be but George Fielding?"

"I see you one George Fielding, but I not know you dis George Fielding. George die. I see him die. You alive. You please you call dog Carlo? Carlo wise dog."

"Well I never! Hie, Carlo! Carlo!"

Up came Carlo full pelt. George patted him, and Carlo wagged his tail and pranced about in the shape of a reaping-hook. Jacky came instantly down, showed his ivories, and admitted his friend's existence on the word of the dog.

"Jacky a good deal glad because you not dead now. When black fellow die he never live any more. Black fellow stupid fellow. I tink I like white fellow a good deal better that black fellow. Now I stay with you a good while."

George's hands thus strengthened, he wrote and told Mr. Winchester he would go to the new ground, which, as far as he could remember, was very good, and would inspect it, and probably make the exchange with thanks. It was arranged that in two days' time the three friends should go together, inspect the new ground, and build a temporary hut there.

Meantime Robinson and Jacky made great friends. Robinson showed him one or two sleight-of-hand tricks that stamped him at once a superior being in Jacky's

eyes, and Jacky showed Robinson a thing or two. He threw his boomerang and made it travel a couple of hundred yards, and return and hover over his head like a bird and settle at his feet; but he was shy of throwing his spear. "Keep spear for when 'um angry, not throw him straight now."

"Don't you believe that, Tom," said George. "Fact is the little varmint can't hit anything with 'em. Now look at that piece of bark leaning against that tree. You don't hit it. Come, try, Jacky." Jacky yawned and threw a spear carelessly. It went close by, but did not hit it.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said George. "I'd stand before him and his spears all day with nothing but a cricket-stump in my hand, and never be hit, and never brag neither."

Jacky showed his ivories. "When I down at Sydney, white man put up a little wood and a bit of white money for Jack. Then Jacky throw straight a good deal."

"Now hark to that! black skin or white skin, 'tis all the same; we can't do our best till we are paid for it. Don't you encourage him, Tom; I won't have it."

The two started early one fine morning for the new ground, distant full thirty miles. At first starting Robinson was in high glee; his nature delighted in change; but George was sad and silent. Three times he had changed his ground, and always for the better. But to what end? These starts in early morning for fresh places used once to make him buoyant, but not now. All that was over. He persisted doggedly, and did his best like a man, but in his secret heart not one grain of hope was left. Indeed it was but the other day he had written to Susan and told her it was not possible he could make a thousand pounds. The difficulties were too many, and then his losses had been too great. And he told her he felt it was scarcely fair to keep her to her promise. "You would waste all your youth, Susan dear, waiting for me." And he told her how he loved her, and never should love another, but left her free.

To add to his troubles, he was scarcely well of the fever when he caught a touch of rheumatism; and the stalwart young fellow limped along by Robinson's side, and instead of his distancing Jacky as he used in better days, Jacky rattled on ahead, and having got on the trail of an opossum, announced his intention of hunting it down and then

following the human trail. "Me catch you before the sun go, and bring opossum—then we eat a good deal." And off glided Jacky after his opossum.

The pair plodded and limped on in gloomy silence, for at a part of the road where they emerged from green meadows on rocks and broken ground Robinson's tongue had suddenly ceased.

They plodded on, one sad and stiff, the other thoughtful. Anyone meeting the pair would have pitied them. Ill success was stamped on them. Their features were so good, their fortunes so unkind. Their clothes were sadly worn, their beards neglected, their looks thoughtful and sad. The convert to honesty stole more than one look at the noble figure that limped beside him, and the handsome face in which gentle, uncomplaining sorrow seemed to be a tenant for life; and to the credit of our nature be it said that his eyes filled and his heart yearned. "Oh, Honesty!" said he, "you are ill-paid here. I have been well paid for my little bit of you, but here is a life of honesty and a life of ill-luck and bitter disappointment. Poor George! poor dear George! Leave you? never while I have hands to work and a brain to devise!"

They now began slowly to mount a gentle slope that ended in a long, black, snake-like hill. "When we get to that hill we shall see my new pasture," said George. "New or old, I doubt 'twill be all the same." And he sighed and relapsed into silence.

Meantime, Jacky had killed his opossum, and was now following their trail at an easy trot.

Leaving the two sad ones with worn clothes and heavy hearts plodding slowly and stiffly up the long, rough slope, our story runs on before, and gains the rocky platform they are making for, and looks both ways—back towards the sad ones and forward over a grand, long, sweeping valley. This pasture is rich in proportion as it recedes from this huge backbone of rock that comes from the stony mountains and pierces and divides the meadows as a cape the sea. In the foreground, the grass suffers from its stern neighbour, is cut up here and there by the channels of defunct torrents, and dotted with fragments of rock, some of which seem to have pierced the bosom of the soil from below, others have been detached at different epochs from the parent rock and rolled into the valley; but these wounds are only discovered on inspection; at a general

glance from the rocky road into the dale the prospect is large, rich, and laughing; fairer pastures are to be found in that favoured land, but this sparkles at you like an emerald roughly set, and, where the backbone of rock gives a sudden twist, bursts out all at once broad-smiling in your face—a land flowing with milk, and every bush a thousand nosegays.

At the angle above-mentioned, which commanded a double view, a man was standing watching some object or objects not visible to his three companions; they were working some yards lower down by the side of a rivulet that brawled and bounded down the hill. Every now and then an inquiry was shouted up to that individual, who was evidently a sort of scout or sentinel. At last, one of the men in the ravine came up and bade the scout go down.

"I'll soon tell you whether we shall have to knock off work." And he turned the corner and disappeared.

He shaded both his eyes with his hands, for the sun was glaring. About a mile off he saw two men coming slowly up by a zigzag path towards the very point where he stood. Presently the men stopped and examined the prospect, each in his own way. The taller one took a wide survey of the low ground, and calling his companion to him, appeared to point out to him some beauty or peculiarity of the region. Our scout stepped back and called down to his companions, "Shepherds!"

He then strolled back to his post with no particular anxiety. Arrived there, his uneasiness seemed to revive. The shorter of the two strangers had lagged behind his comrade, and the watcher observed that he was carrying on a close and earnest inspection of the ground in detail. He peered into the hollows and loitered in every ravine. This gave singular offence to the keen eye that was now upon him. Presently he was seen to stop and call his taller companion to him, and point with great earnestness first to something at their feet, then to the backbone of rocks; and it so happened by mere accident that his finger took nearly the direction of the very spot where the observer of all his movements stood. The man started back out of sight, and called in a low voice to his comrades, "Come here."

They came straggling up with troubled and lowering faces. "Lie down and watch them," said the leader. The men stooped and crawled forward to some stunted bushes,

behind which they lay down and watched in silence the unconscious pair, who were now about two furlongs distant. The shorter of the two still loitered behind his companion, and inspected the ground with particular interest. The leader of the band, who went by the name of Black Will, muttered a curse upon his inquisitiveness. The others assented, all but one, a huge fellow whom the others addressed as Jem. "Nonsense!" said Jem; "dozens pass this way and are none the wiser."

"Ay," replied Black Will, "with their noses in the air. But that is a notice-taking fellow. Look at him with his eyes for ever on the rocks or in the gullies, or—there, if he is not picking up a stone and breaking it!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Jem incredulously, "how many thousand have picked up stones and broke them and all, and never known what we know."

"He has been in the same oven as we," retorted the other.

Here one of the others put in his word. "That is not likely, captain; but if it is so, there are no two ways. A secret is no secret if all the world is to know it."

"You remember our oath, Jem," said the leader sternly.

"Why should I forget it more than another?" replied the other angrily.

"Have you all your knives?" asked the captain gloomily.

The men nodded assent. "Cross them with me, as we did when we took our oath first."

The men stretched out each a brawny arm, and a long, sharp knife, so that all the points came together in a focus; and this action suited well with their fierce and animal features, their long-neglected beards, their matted hair, and their gleaming eyes. It looked the prologue to some deed of blood. This done, at another word from their ruffianly leader they turned away from the angle in the rock and plunged hastily down the ravine: but they had scarcely taken thirty steps when they suddenly disappeared.

In the neighbourhood of the small stream I have mentioned was a cavern of irregular shape that served these men for a habitation and place of concealment. Nature had not done all. The stone was soft, and the natural cavity had been enlarged and made a comfortable retreat enough for the hardy men whose home it was. A few feet from the mouth of the cave on one side grew a stout bush that added to the shelter and the concealment, and on the

other the men themselves had placed two or three huge stones, which, from the attitude the rogues had given them, appeared, like many others, to have rolled thither years ago from the rock above.

In this retreat the whole band were now silently couched, two of them in the mouth of the cave, Black Will and another lying flat on their stomachs watching the angle of the road for the two men who must pass that way, and listening for every sound. Black Will was carefully and quietly sharpening his knife on one of the stones, and casting back every now and then a meaning glance to his companions. The pertinacity with which he held to his idea began to tell on them, and they sat in an attitude of sullen and terrible suspicion. But Jem wore a look of contemptuous incredulity. However small a society may be, if it is a human one, jealousy shall creep in. Jem grudged Black Will his captaincy. Jem was intellectually a bit of a brute; he was a stronger man than Will, and therefore thought it hard that merely because Will was a keener spirit, Will should be over him. Half an hour passed thus, and the two travellers did not make their appearance.

"Not even coming this way at all," said Jem.

"Hush!" replied Will sternly, "hold your tongue. They must come this way, and they can't be far off. Jem, you can crawl out and see where they are, if you are clever enough to keep that great body out of sight." Jem resented this doubt cast upon his adroitness, and crawled out among the bushes. He had scarcely got twenty yards when he halted and made a signal that the men were in sight. Soon afterwards he came back with less precaution. "They are sitting eating their dinner close by, just on the sunny side of the rock—shepherds, as I told you—got a dog. Go yourself, if you don't believe me."

The leader went to the spot, and soon after returned and said quietly, "Pals, I daresay he is right. Lie still till they have had their dinner; they are going farther, no doubt."

Soon after this he gave a hasty signal of silence, for George and Robinson at that moment came round the corner of the rock and stood on the road not fifty yards above them. Here they paused as the valley burst on their view, and George pointed out its qualities to his comrade.

"It is not first-rate, Tom, but there is good grass in patches, and plenty of water."

Robinson, instead of replying or giving his mind to the prospect, said to George, "Why, where is he?"

"Who?"

"The man that I saw standing at this corner a while ago. He came round this way, I'll be sworn."

"He is gone away, I suppose. I never saw anyone, for my part."

"I did, though. Gone away? How could he go away? The road is in sight for miles, and not a creature on it. He is vanished."

"I don't see him, anyway, Tom."

"Of course you don't; he is vanished into the bowels of the earth. I don't like gentlemen that vanish into the bowels of the earth."

"How suspicious you are! Bushrangers again, I suppose. They are always running in your mind—them and gold."

"You know the country, George. Here, take my stick." And he handed George a long stick with a heavy iron ferule. "If a man is safe here, he owes it to himself, not to his neighbour."

"Then why do you give me your weapon?" said George, with a smile.

"I haven't," was the reply. "I carry my sting out of sight like a humble bee." And Mr. Robinson winked mysteriously, and the process seemed to relieve his mind and soothe his suspicions. He then fell to inspecting the rocks; and when George pointed out to him the broad and distant pasture, he said in an absent way, "Yes;" and turning round, George found him with his eyes glued to the ground at his feet, and his mind in a deep reverie. George was vexed, and said somewhat warmly, "Why, Tom, the place is worth looking at, now we are come to it, surely."

Robinson made no direct reply. "George," said he thoughtfully, "how far have you got towards your thousand pounds?"

"Oh, Tom! don't ask me, don't remind me! How can I ever make it? No market within a thousand miles of any place in this confounded country! Forced to boil down sheep into tallow, and sell them for the price of a wild duck! I have left my Susan, and I have lost her. Oh, why did you remind me?"

"So much for the farming lay. Don't you be down-hearted; there's better cards in the pack than the five of

spades; and the farther I go and the more I see of this country the surer I am. There is a good day coming for you and me. Listen, George. When I shut my eyes for a moment now where I stand, and then open them, I'm in California."

"Dreaming?"

"No, wide awake—wider than you are now. George, look at these hills; you could not tell them from the golden range of California. But that is not all; when you look into them, you find they are made of the same stuff too—granite, mica, and quartz. Now, don't you be cross."

"No, no! why should I? Show me," said George, trying out of kind-heartedness to take an interest in this subject which had so often wearied him.

"Well, here are two of them; that great dark bit out there is mica, and all this that runs in a vein like is quartz. Quartz and mica are the natural home of gold; and some gold is to be found at home still, but the main of it has been washed out and scattered like seed all over the neighbouring clays. You see, George, the world is a thousand times older than most folks think, and water has been working upon gold thousands and thousands of years before ever a man stood upon the earth, ay, or a dog either, Carlo, for as wise as you look squatting out there, thinking of nothing and pretending to be thinking of everything."

"Well, drop gold," said George, "and tell me what this is;" and he handed Robinson a small fossil.

Robinson eyed it with wonder and interest. "Where on earth did you find this?"

"Hard by; what is it?"

"Plenty of these in California. What is it? Why, I'll tell you; it is a pale old Joey."

"You don't say so; looks like a shell."

"Sit down a moment, George, and let us look at it. He bids me drop gold, and then goes and shows me a proof of gold that never deceived us out there."

"You are mad. How can this be a sign of gold? I tell you it is a shell."

"And I tell you that where these things are found among mica, quartz, and granite, there gold is to be found, if men have the wit, the patience, and the skill to look for it. I can't tell you why; the laws of gold puzzle deeper heads

than mine, but so it is. I seem to smell gold all round me here." And Robinson flushed all over, so powerfully did the great idea of gold, seated here on his native throne, grapple and agitate his mind.

"Tom," said the other doggedly, "if there is as much gold on the ground of New South Wales as will make me a wedding-ring, I'm a Dutchman;" and he got up calmly and jerked the pale old Joey a tremendous way into the valley.

This action put Robinson's blood up. "George," cried he, springing up like fire and bringing his foot down sharp upon the rocky floor, "IF I DON'T STAND UPON GOLD, I'M D——D!"

And a wild but true inspiration seemed to be upon the man; a stranger could hardly have helped believing him, but George had heard a good deal of this, though the mania had never gone quite so far. He said quickly, "Come, let us go down into the pasture."

"Not I," replied Robinson. "Come, George, prejudice is for babies, experience for men. Here is an unknown country with all the signs of gold thicker than ever. I have got a calabash—stay and try for gold in this gully; it looks to me just like the mouth of a purse."

"Not I."

"I will, then."

"Why not? I don't think you will find anything in it, but anyway you will have a better chance when I am not by to spoil you. Luck is all against me. If I want rain, comes drought; if I want sun, look for a deluge; if there is money to be made by a thing, I'm out of it; to be lost, I'm in it; if I loved a vixen, she'd drop into my arms like a medlar; I love an angel, and that is why I shall never have her, never. From a game of marbles to the game of life I never had a grain of luck like other people. Leave me, Tom, and try if you can find gold; you will have a chance, my poor fellow, if unlucky George is not aside you."

"Leave you, George! not if I know it."

"You are to blame if you don't. Turn your back on me as I did on you in England."

"Never! I'd rather not find gold than part with honesty. There, I'm coming—let us go—quick—come, let us leave here." And the two men left the road and turned their faces and their steps across the ravine.

During all this dialogue the men in the cave had strained both eyes and ears to comprehend the speakers. The distance was too great for them to catch all the words, but this much was clear from the first, that one of the men wished to stay on the spot for some purpose, and the other to go on; but presently as the speakers warmed, a word travelled down the breeze that made the four ruffians start and turn red with surprise, and the next moment darken with anger and apprehension. The word came again and again; they all heard it —its open vowel gave it a sonorous ring; it seemed to fly farther than any other word the speaker uttered, or perhaps when he came to it he spoke it louder than smaller words, or the hearers' ears were watching for it.

The men interchanged terrible looks, and then they grasped their knives and watched their leader's eye for some deadly signal. Again and again the word "g-o-l-d" came like an Æolian note into the secret cave, and each time eye sought eye and read the unlucky speaker's death-warrant there. But when George prevailed and the two men started for the valley, the men in the cave cast uncertain looks on one another, and he we have called Jem drew a long breath and said brutally, yet with something of satisfaction, "You have saved your bacon this time." The voices now drew near and the men crouched close, for George and Robinson passed within fifteen yards of them. They were talking now about matters connected with George's business, for Robinson made a violent effort and dropped his favourite theme to oblige his comrade. They passed near the cave, and presently their backs were turned to it.

"Good-bye, my lads," whispered Jem. "And curse you for making us lose a good half an hour," muttered another of the gang. The words were scarce out of his mouth before a sudden rustle was heard, and there was Carlo; he had pulled up in mid-career, and stood transfixed with astonishment, literally pointing the gang. It was but for a moment—he did not like the looks of the men at all; he gave a sharp bark that made George and Robinson turn quickly round, and then he went on hunting.

"A kangaroo!" shouted Robinson; "it must have got up near that bush; come and look. If it is, we will hunt it down."

George turned back with him, but on reflection he

said, "No! Tom, we have a long road to go; let us keep on, if you please;" and they once more turned their backs to the cave, whistled Carlo, and stepped briskly out towards the valley. A few yards before them was the brook I have already noticed: it was about three yards broad at this spot. However, Robinson, who was determined not to make George lose any more time, took the lead, and, giving himself the benefit of a run, cleared it like a buck; but as he was in the air his eye caught some object on this side the brook, and making a little circle on the other side, he came back with ludicrous precipitancy, and jumping short, landed with one foot on shore and one in the stream. George burst out laughing.

"Do you see this?" cried Robinson.

"Yes; somebody has been digging a hole here," said George very coolly.

"Come higher up," cried Robinson, all in a flutter.

"Do you see this?"

"Yes; it is another hole."

"It is: do you see this wet too?"

"I see there has been some water spilt by the brook-side."

"What kind of work has been done here? Have they been digging potatoes, farmer?"

"Don't be foolish, Tom."

"Is it any kind of work you know? Here is another trench dug."

"No, it is nothing in my way, that is the truth."

"But it is work the signs of which I know as well as you know a ploughed field from a turnpike road."

"Why, what is it, then?"

"It is gold-washing."

"You don't say so, Tom?"

"This is gold-washing as beginners practise it in California and Mexico, and Peru, and wherever gold-dust is found. They have been working with a pan; they haven't got such a thing as a cradle in this country. Come lower down; this was yesterday's work; let us find to-day's."

The two men now ran down the stream busy as dogs hunting an otter. A little lower down they found both banks of the stream pitted with holes about two feet deep, and the sides drenched with water from it.

"Well, if it is so, you need not look so pale. Why, dear me, how pale you are, Tom!"

"You would be pale," gasped Tom, "if you could see what a day this is for you and me, ay! and for all the world, old England especially. George, in a month there will be five thousand men working round this little spot. Ay! come," cried he, shouting wildly at the top of his voice, "there is plenty for all. GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! I have found it. I, Tom Robinson, I've found it, and I grudge it to no man. I, a thief that was, make a present of it to its rightful owner, and that is all the world. Here! GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!"

Though George hardly understood his companion's words, he was carried away by the torrent of his enthusiasm, and even as Robinson spoke, his cheeks in turn flushed and his eyes flashed, and he grasped his friend's hands warmly, and cried, "GOLD! GOLD! blessings on it if it takes me to Susan; GOLD! GOLD!"

The poor fellow's triumph and friendly exultation lasted but a moment; the words were scarce out of Robinson's mouth, when to his surprise George started from him, turned very pale, but at the same time lifted his iron-shod stick high in the air and clenched his teeth with desperate resolution. Four men with shaggy beards and wild faces and murderous eyes were literally upon them, each with a long, glittering knife raised in the air.

At that fearful moment George learned the value of a friend that had seen adventure and crime. Rapid and fierce and unexpected as the attack was, Robinson was not caught off his guard. His hand went like lightning into his bosom, and the assailants in the very act of striking were met in the face by the long, glistening barrels of a rifle-revolver, while the cool, wicked eye behind it showed them nothing was to be hoped in that quarter from flurry, or haste, or indecision.

The two men nearest the revolver started back, the other two neither recoiled nor advanced, but merely hung fire. George made a movement to throw himself upon them, but Robinson seized him fiercely by the arm. He said steadily but sternly, "Keep cool, young man—no running among their knives while they are four. Strike across me, and I shall guard you till we have thinned 'em."

"Will you?" said Black Will; "here, pals!"

The four assailants came together like a fan for a moment and took a whisper from their leader. They then spread out like a fan and began to encircle their antagonists so as to attack on both sides at once.

"Back to the water, George," cried Robinson quickly, "to the broad part here." Robinson calculated that the stream would protect his rear, and that safe, he was content to wait and profit by the slightest error of his numerous assailants. This, however, was to a certain degree a miscalculation, for the huge ruffian we have called Jem sprang boldly across the stream higher up, and prepared to attack the men behind the moment they should be engaged with his comrades. The others no sooner saw him in position than they rushed desperately upon George and Robinson in the form of a crescent, and as they came on, Jem came flying knife in hand to plunge it into Robinson's back. As the front assailants neared them, true to his promise, Robinson fired across George, and the outside man received a bullet in his shoulder-blade, and turning round like a top, fell upon his knees. Unluckily, George wasted a blow at this man, which sung idly over him, he dropping his head and losing his knife and his powers at the very moment. By this means Robinson, the moment he had fired his pistol, had no less than three assailants; one of these George struck behind the neck so furiously with a back-handed stroke of his iron-shod stick that he fell senseless at Robinson's feet. The other, met in front by the revolver, recoiled, but kept Robinson at bay while Jem sprang on him from the rear. This attack was the most dangerous of all; in fact, neither Robinson nor George had time to defend themselves against him, even if they had seen him, which they did not. Now, as Jem was in the very act of making his spring from the other side of the brook, a spear glanced like a streak of light past the principal combatants and pierced Jem through and through the fleshy part of the thigh, and there stood Jacky at forty yards distance, with the hand still raised from which the spear had flown, and his emu-like eye glittering with the light of battle.

Jem, instead of bounding clear over the stream, fell heavily into the middle of it, and lay writhing and floundering at George's mercy, who, turning in alarm at the sound, stood over him with his long, deadly staff whirling and swinging round his head in the air, while Robinson placed one foot firmly on the stunned man's right arm and threatened the leader, Black Will, with his pistol, and at the same moment with a wild and piercing yell Jacky came down in leaps like a kangaroo, his tomahawk

flourished over his head, his features entirely changed, and the thirst of blood written upon every inch of him. Black Will was preparing to run away and leave his wounded companions, but at sight of the fleet savage he stood still and roared out for mercy.

"Quarter! quarter!" cried Black Will.

"Down on your knees!" cried Robinson in a terrible voice.

The man fell on his knees, and in that posture Jacky would certainly have knocked out his brains, but that Robinson pointed the pistol at his head and forbade him; and Carlo, who had arrived hastily at the sound of battle in great excitement, but not with clear ideas, seeing Jacky, whom he always looked on as a wild animal, opposed in some way to Robinson, seized him directly by the leg from behind and held him howling in a vice.

"Hold your cursed noise, all of you," roared Robinson. "D'ye ask quarter?"

"Quarter!" cried Black Bill. "Quarter!" gurgled Jem. "Quarter!" echoed more faintly the wounded man. The other was insensible.

"Then throw me your knives." The men hesitated.

"Throw me them this instant or——" They threw down their knives.

"George, take them and tie them up in your wipe." George took the knives and tied them up.

"Now pull that big brute out of the water or he'll drown himself." George and Jacky pulled Jem out of the water with the spear sticking in him; the water was discoloured with his blood.

"Pull the spear out of him!" George pulled and Jem roared with pain, but the spear-head would not come back through the wound; then Jacky came up and broke the light shaft off close to the skin, and grasping the head, drew the remainder through the wound forward, and grinned with a sense of superior wisdom.

By this time the man whom George had felled sat up on his beam-ends, winking and blinking and confused like a great owl at sunrise.

Then Robinson, who had never lost his presence of mind, and had now recovered his *sang froid,* made all four captives sit round together on the ground in one little lot, "While I show you the error of your ways," said he. "I could forgive a rascal, but I hate a fool. You thought

to keep such a secret as this all to yourselves—you dunces—the very birds in the air would carry it; it never was kept secret in any land, and never will. And you would spill blood sooner than your betters should know it, ye ninnycum-poops! What the worse are you for our knowing it? If a thousand knew it to-day, would that lower the price of gold a penny an ounce? No! All the harm they could do you would be this, that some of them would show you where it lies thickest, and then you'd profit by it. You had better tie that leg of yours up; you have lost blood enough, I should say, by the look of you. Haven't you got a wipe? Here, take mine—you deserve it, don't you? No man's luck hurts his neighbour at this work. How clever you were! you have just pitched on the unlikeliest place in the whole gully, and you wanted to kill the man that would have taught you which are the likelier ones. I shall find ten times as much gold before the sun sets as you will find in a week by the side of that stream. Why, it hasn't been running above a thousand years or two, I should say, by the look of it; you have got plenty to learn, you bloody-minded green-horns! Now, I'll tell you what it is," continued Robinson, getting angry about it, "since you are for keeping dark what little you know, I'll keep you dark; and in ten minutes my pal here and the very nigger shall know more about gold-finding than you know; so be off, for I am going to work. Come, march!"

"Where are we to go, mate?" said the leader sullenly.

"Do you see that ridge about three miles west? Well, if we catch you on this side of it, we will hang you like wild cats. On the other side of it do what you like, and try all you know; but this gully belongs to us now. You wanted to take something from us that did not belong to you—our blood—so now we take something from you that didn't belong to us a minute or two ago. Come, mizzle, and no more words, or——" and he pointed the tail of his discourse with his revolver.

The men rose, and with sullen, rueful, downcast looks moved off in the direction of the boundary; but one remained behind—the man was Jem.

"Well?"

"Captain, I wish you would let me join in with you!"

"What for?"

"Well, captain, you've lent me your wipe, and I think a

deal of it, for it's what I did not deserve; but that is not all. You are the best man, and I like to be under the best man if I must be under anybody."

Robinson hesitated a moment. "Come here," said he. The man came and fronted him. "Look me in the face! now give me your hand—quick, no thinking about how!" The man gave him his hand readily. Robinson looked into his eyes. "What is your name?"

"Jem."

"Jem, we take you on trial."

Jem's late companions, who perfectly comprehended what was passing, turned and hooted the deserter; Jem, whose ideas of repartee were primitive, turned and hooted them in reply.

While the men were retreating, Robinson walked thoughtfully with his hands behind him backwards and forwards, like a great admiral on his quarter-deck—enemy to leeward. Every eye was upon him, and watched him in respectful, inquiring silence. "Knowledge is power;" this was the man now—the rest children.

"What tools have you?"

"There is a spade and trowel in that bush, captain."

"Fetch them, George. Hadn't you a pan?"

"No, captain; we used a calabash: he will find it lower down."

George, after a little search, found all these objects, and brought them back.

'Now," cried Robinson, "these greenhorns have been washing in a stream that runs now, but perhaps in the days of Noah was not a river at all; but you look at the old bed of a stream down out there: that was a much stronger stream than this in its day, and it ran for more than a hundred thousand years before it dried up."

"How can you tell that?" said George, resuming some of his incredulity.

"Look at those monstrous stones in it here, there, and everywhere. It has been a powerful stream to carry such masses with it as that, and it has been running many thousand years, for see how deep it has eaten into its rocky sides here and there. That was a river, my lads, and washed gold down for hundreds of thousands of years before ever Adam stood on the earth." The men gave a hurrah, and George and Jacky prepared to run and find the treasure. "Stop," cried Robinson, "you are not at the

gold yet. Can you tell in what parts of the channel it lies thick, and where there isn't enough to pay the labour of washing it? Well, I can. Look at that bend where the round pebbles are collected so; there was a strong eddy there. Well, under the ridge of that eddy is ten times as much gold lying as in the level parts. Stop a bit again. Do you know how deep or how shallow it lies? do you think you can find it by the eye? Do you know what clays it sinks through as if they were a sieve, and what stops it like an iron door? Your quickest way is to take Captain Robinson's time—and that is now."

He snatched the spade, and giving full vent to the ardour he had so long suppressed with difficulty, plunged down a little declivity that led to the ancient stream, and drove his spade into its shingle, the debris of centuries of centuries. George sprang after him, his eyes gleaming with hope and agitation; the black followed in wonder and excitement, and the wounded Jem limped last, and, unable through weakness to work, seated himself with glowing eyes upon that ancient river's bank.

"Away with all this gravel and shingle—these are all newcomers—the real bed of the stream is below all this, and we must get down to that."

Trowel and spade and tomahawk went furiously to work, and soon cleared away the gravel from a surface of three or four feet; beneath this they found a bed of gray clay.

"Let us wash that, captain," said Jem eagerly.

"No, Jem," was the reply; "that is the way novices waste their time. This gray clay is porous, too porous to hold gold—we must go deeper."

Tomahawk, spade, and trowel went furiously to work again.

"Give me the spade," said George, and he dug and shovelled out with herculean strength and amazing ardour; his rheumatism was gone, and nerves came back from that very hour.

"Here is a white clay."

"Let me see it. Pipeclay! go no deeper, George; if you were to dig a hundred feet you would not find an ounce of gold below that."

George rested on his spade. "What are we to do, then? Try somewhere else?"

"Not till we have tried here first."

"But you say there is nothing below this pipeclay."

"No more there is."

'Well, then."

"But I don't say there is nothing above it !!!"

"Well, but there is nothing much above it except the gray, without 'tis this small streak of brownish clay, but that is not an inch thick."

"George! in that inch lies all the gold we are likely to find; if it is not there, we have only to go elsewhere. Now, while I get water, you stick your spade in and cut the brown clay away from the white it lies on. Don't leave a spot of the brown sticking to the white—the lower part of the brown clay is the likeliest."

A shower having fallen the day before, Robinson found water in a hole not far distant. He filled his calabash and returned; meantime, George and Jacky had got together nearly a barrowful of the brown, or rather chocolate-coloured clay, mixed slightly with the upper and lower strata, the gray and white.

"I want yon calabash, and George's as well." Robinson filled George's calabash two-thirds full of the stuff, and pouring some water upon it, said good-naturedly to Jem, "There, you may do the first washing if you like."

"Thank you, captain," said Jem, who proceeded instantly to stir and dissolve the clay and pour it carefully away as it dissolved. Jacky was sent for more water, and this, when used as described, had left the clay reduced to about one-sixth of its original bulk.

"Now, captain," cried Jem in great excitement.

"No, it's not captain yet," said Robinson; "is that the way you do pan-washing?"

He then took the calabash from Jem, and gave him Jacky's calabash two-thirds full of clay to treat like the other, and this being done, he emptied the dry remains of one calabash into the other, and gave Jem a third lot to treat likewise. This done, you will observe he had in one calabash the results of three first washings; but now he trusted Jem no longer. He took the calabash and said, "You look faint, you are not fit to work; besides, you have not got the right twist of the hand yet, my lad. Pour for me, George."

Robinson stirred and began to dissolve the three remainders, and every now and then with an artful turn of the hand he sent a portion of the muddy liquid out of the vessel. At the end of this washing there remained

scarce more than a good handful of clay at the bottom. More water was poured on this. "Now," said Robinson, "we shall know this time, and if you see but one spot of yellow amongst it, we are all gentlemen and men of fortune."

He dissolved the clay, and twisted and turned the vessel with great dexterity, and presently the whole of the clay was liquefied.

"Now," said Robinson, "all your eyes upon it, and if I spill anything I ought to keep, you tell me." He said this conceitedly, but with evident agitation. He was now pouring away the dirty water with the utmost care, so that anything, however small, that might be heavier than clay should remain behind. Presently he paused and drew a long breath. He feared to decide so great a question: it was but for a moment; he began again to pour the dirty water away very slowly and carefully. Every eye was diving into the vessel. There was a dead silence! Robinson poured with great care. There was now little more than a wine-glassful left.

DEAD SILENCE!

Suddenly a tremendous cry broke from all these silent figures at the same instant. A cry? it was a yell! I don't know what to compare it to; but imagine that a score of wolves had hunted a horse for two centuries up and down, round and round, sometimes losing a yard, sometimes gaining one on him, and at last, after a thousand disappointments and fierce alternations of hope and despair, the horse had suddenly stumbled, and the wild gluttons had pounced on him at last. Such a fierce yell of triumph burst from four human bosoms now.

"Hurrah! we are the greatest men above ground. If a hundred emperors and kings died to-day, their places could be filled to-morrow; but the world could not do without us and our find. We are gentlemen—we are noblemen—we are whatever we like to be. Hurrah!" cried Robinson.

"Hurrah!" cried George; "I see my Susan's eyes in you, you beauty."

"Hurrah!" whined Jem feebly; "let me see how much there is," and clutching the calabash, he fainted at that moment from loss of blood, and fell forward insensible, his face in the vessel that held the gold, and his hands

grasping it so tight that great force had to be used to separate them.

They lifted Jem and set him up again, and sprinkled water in his face. The man's thick lip was cut by the side of the vessel, and more than one drop of blood had trickled down its sides and mingled with the gold-dust.

No comment was made on this at the time. They were so busy.

"There, he's coming to, and we've no time to waste nursing the sick. Work!" and they sprang up on to the work again.

It was not what you have seen pass for work in Europe, it was men working themselves for once as they make horses work for ever. Work? It was battle; it was humanity fighting and struggling with Nature for her prime treasure (so esteemed). How they dug and scraped, and fought, tooth, and spade, and nail, and trowel, and tomahawk for gold! Their shirts were wet through with sweat, yet they felt no fatigue. Their trousers were sheets of clay, yet they suffered no sense of dirt. The wounded man recovered a portion of his strength, and, thirsting for gold, brought feeble hands but indomitable ardour to the great cause. They dug, they scraped, they bowed their backs, and wrought with fury and inspiration unparalleled; and when the sun began to decline behind the hills, these four human mutes felt injured. They lifted their eyes a moment from the ground, and cast a fretful look at the great tranquil luminary.

"Are you really going to set this afternoon the same as usual, when we need your services so?"

Would you know why that wolfish yell of triumph? Would you see what sight so electrified those gloating eyes and panting bosoms? Would you realise that discovery which in six months peopled that barren spot with thousands of men from all the civilised tribes upon earth, and in a few years must and will make despised Australia a queen among the nations—nations who must and will come with the best thing they have, wealth, talent, cunning, song, pencil, pen, tongue, arm, and lay them all at her feet for this one thing?

Would you behold this great discovery the same in appearance and magnitude as it met the eyes of the first discoverers, picked with a knife from the bottom of a calabash, separated at last by human art and gravity's great

law from the meaner dust it had lurked in for a million years—

Then turn your eyes hither, for here it is.

CHAPTER LIII.

Mr. Meadows despatched his work in Shropshire twice as fast as he had calculated, and returned home with two forces battling inside him—love and prudence. The battle was decided for him.

William Fielding's honest but awkward interference had raised in Susan Merton a desire to separate her sentiments from his by showing Mr. Meadows a marked respect. She heard of his arrival, and instantly sent her father to welcome him home. Old Merton embraced the commission, for he happened to need Meadows' advice and assistance. The speculations into which he had been led by Mr. Clinton, after some fluctuations, wore a gloomy look, "which could only be temporary," said that gentleman. Still, a great loss would be incurred by selling out of them at a period of depression, and Mr. Clinton advised him to borrow a thousand pounds and hold on till things brightened.

Mr. Meadows smiled grimly as the fly came and buzzed all this in his web. "Dear! dear! what a pity my money is locked up! Go to Lawyer Crawley. Use my name. He won't refuse my friend, for I could do him an ill turn if I chose."

"I will. You are a true friend. You will look in and see us, of course, market-day?"

"Why not?"

Meadows did not resume his visits at Grassmere without some twinges of conscience, and a prudent resolve not to anchor his happiness upon Susan Merton. "That man might come here any day with his thousand pounds and take her from me," said he. "He seems by his letters to be doing well, and they say any fool can make money in the colonies. Well, if he comes home respectable and well-to-do, I'll go out. If I am not to have the only woman I ever loved or cared for, let thousands and thousands of miles of sea lie between me and that pair." But still he wheeled about the flame. Ere long matters took a very different turn. The tone of George's letters began to change. His repeated losses of bullocks and sheep were all recorded in his letters to Susan, and these letters were all read with eager anxiety by Meadows a day before they reached Grassmere.

The respectable man did not commit this action without some iron passing through his own soul. *Nemo repente turpissimus.* The first letter he opened, it was like picking a lock. He writhed and blushed, and his uncertain fingers fumbled with another's property as if it had been red-hot. The next cost him some shame too, but the next less, and soon these little spasms of conscience began to be lost in the pleasure the letters gave him. "It is clear he will never make a thousand pounds out there, and if he doesn't, the old farmer won't give him Susan. Won't? He shan't! He shall be too deep in my debt to venture on it, even if he was minded." Meadows exulted over the letters; and as he exulted they stabbed him, for by the side of the records of his ill-fortune the exile never failed to pour out his love and confidence in his Susan, and to acknowledge the receipt of some dear letter from her, which Meadows could see by George's must have assured him of undiminished or even increased affection.

Thus did sin lead to sin. By breaking a seal which was not his, and reading letters which were not his, Meadows filled himself with the warmest hopes of possessing Susan one day, and got to hate George for the stabs the young man innocently gave him. At last he actually looked on George as a sort of dog in the manger, who could not make Susan happy, yet would come between her heart and one who could. All weapons seemed lawful against such a mere pest as this—a dog in the manger.

Meadows started with nothing better nor worse than a

commonplace conscience. A vicious habit is an iron that soon sears that sort of article. When he had opened and read about four letters, his moral nature turned stone-blind of one eye; and now he was happier (on the surface) than he had been ever since he fell in love with Susan.

Sure now that one day or another she must be his, he waited patiently, enjoyed her society twice a week, got everybody into his power, and bided his time. And one frightful thing in all this was, that his love for Susan was not only a strong, but in itself a good love. I mean it was a love founded on esteem; it was a passionate love, and yet a profound and tender affection. It was the love which, under different circumstances, has often weaned men, ay, and women too, from a frivolous, selfish, and sometimes from a vicious life. This love Meadows thought and hoped would hallow the unlawful means by which he must crown it. In fact, he was mixing vice and virtue. The snow was to whiten the pitch, not the pitch blacken the snow. Thousands had tried this before him and will try it after him. Oh that I could persuade them to mix fire and gunpowder instead! Men would bless me for this when all else I have written has been long, long forgotten.

He felt good all over when he sat with Susan and thought how his means would enable that angel to satisfy her charitable nature, and win the prayers of the poor as well as the admiration of the wealthy. "If ever a woman was cherished, she shall be! If ever a woman was happy, she shall be!" And as for him, if he had done wrong to win her, he would more than compensate it afterwards. In short, he had been more than twenty years selling, buying, swapping, driving every conceivable earthly bargain—so now he was proposing one to Heaven.

At last came a letter in which George told Susan of the fatal murrain among his sheep, of his fever that had followed immediately, of the further losses while he lay ill, and concluded by saying that he had no right to tie her to his misfortunes, and that he felt it would be more manly to set her free.

When he read this, Meadows' exultation broke all bounds. "Ah, ha!" cried he, "is it come to that at last? Well, he is a fine fellow after all, and looks at it the sensible way, and if I can do him a good turn in business, I always will."

The next day he called at Grassmere. Susan met him

all smiles, and was more cheerful than usual. The watchful man was delighted. "Come, she does not take it to heart." He did not guess that Susan had cried for hours and hours over the letter, and then had sat quietly down and written a letter, and begged George to come home and not add separation to their other misfortunes; and that it was this decision, and having acted upon it, that had made her cheerful. Meadows argued in his own favour, and now made sure to win.

The next week he called three times at Grassmere instead of twice, and asked himself how much longer he must wait before he should speak out. Prudence said, "A little more patience;" and so he still hid in his bosom the flame that burned him the deeper for this unnatural smothering. But he drank deep silent draughts of love, and revelled in the bright future of his passion.

It was no longer hope, it was certainty. Susan liked him; her eye brightened at his coming; her father was in his power. There was nothing between them but the distant shadow of a rival; sooner or later she must be his. So passed three calm, delicious weeks away.

CHAPTER LIV.

Meadows sat one day in his study receiving Crawley's report.

"Old Mr. Merton came yesterday. I made difficulties, as instructed. Is to come to-morrow."

"He shall have the eight hundred."

"That makes two thousand four hundred; why, his whole stock won't cover it."

"No!"

"Don't understand it; it is too deep for me. What is the old gentleman doing?"

"Hunting Will-o'-the-wisp. Throwing it away in speculations that are coloured bright for him by a man that wants to ruin him."

"Aha!" cackled Crawley.

"And do him no harm."

"Augh! how far is it to the bottom of the sea, sir, if you please? I'm sure you know, Mr. Levi and you."

"Crawley," said Meadows, suddenly turning the

conversation, "the world calls me close-fisted; have you found me so?"

"Liberal as running water, sir. I sometimes say, how long will this last before such a great man breaks Peter Crawley and flings him away and takes another?" and Crawley sighed.

"Then your game is to make yourself necessary to me."

"I wish I could," said Peter with mock candour. "Sir," he crept on, "if the most ardent zeal, if punctuality, secrecy, and unscrupulous fidelity——"

"Hold your gammon! Are we writing a book together? Answer me this in English. How far dare you go along with me?"

"As far as your purse extends—only——"

"Only what? Only your thermometer is going down already, I suppose."

"No, sir, but what I mean is, I shouldn't like to do anything too bad."

"What d'ye mean by too bad?"

"Punishable by law."

"It is not your conscience you fear, then?" asked the other gloomily.

"Oh dear, no, sir; only the law."

"I envy you. There is but one crime punishable by law, and that I shall never counsel you to."

"Only one—too deep, sir, too deep. Which is that?"

"The crime of getting found out."

"What a great man! How far would I go with you? To the end of the earth. I have but one regret, sir."

"And what is that?"

"That I am not thought worthy of your confidence—that, after so many years, I am still only a too—I mean an honoured instrument, and not a humble friend."

"Crawley," said Meadows solemnly, "let well alone. Don't ask my confidence, for I am often tempted to give it you, and that would be all one as if I put the blade of a razor in your naked hand."

"I don't care, sir! You are up to some game as deep as a coal-pit, and I go on working and working all in the dark. I'd give anything to be in your confidence."

"Anything is nothing; put it in figures," sneered Meadows incredulously.

"I'll give twenty per cent. off all you give me if you will let me see the bottom."

"The bottom?"

"The reason, sir—the motive—the why—the wherefore—the what it is all to end in. The bottom!"

"Why not say you would like to read John Meadows' heart?"

"Don't be angry, sir; it is presumption, but I can't help it. Deduct twenty per cent. for so great an honour."

"Why, the fool is in earnest."

"He is; we have all got our little vanity, and like to be thought worthy of confidence."

"Humph!"

"And then I can't sleep for puzzling. Why should you stop every letter that comes here from Australia? Oh, bless me, how neglectful I am! here is a letter from there, just come. To think of me bringing it and then forgetting."

"Give it me directly."

"There it is. And then, why on earth are we ruining old Mr. Merton without benefiting you? and you seem so friendly with him; and indeed you say he is not to be harmed—only ruined; it makes my head ache.—Why, what is the matter, Mr. Meadows, sir? What is wrong? No ill news, I hope. I wish I'd never brought the letter."

"That will do, Crawley," said Meadows faintly; "you may go." Crawley rose with a puzzled air.

"Come here to-morrow evening at nine o'clock, and you shall have your wish. All the worse for you," added he moodily; "all the worse for me. Now go without one word."

Crawley retired dumfounded. He saw the iron man had received some strange, unexpected, and terrible blow; but for a moment awe suppressed curiosity, and he went off on tiptoe, saying almost in a whisper, "To-morrow night at nine, sir."

Meadows spread George's letter on the table, and leaned on his two hands over it.

The letter was written some weeks after the last desponding one. It was full of modest but warm and buoyant exultation. Heaven had been very good to Susan and him. Robinson had discovered gold—gold in such abundance and quality as beat even California. The thousand pounds so lately despaired of was now a certainty. Six months' work with average good fortune would do it. Robinson said five thousand apiece was the least they ought to

bring home; but how could he (George) wait so long as that would take? "And, Susan dear, if anything could make this wonderful luck sweeter, it is to think that I owe it to you and to your goodness. It was you that gave Tom the letter, and bade me be kind to him, and keep him by me for his good; he has repaid me by making us two man and wife, please God. See what a web life is! Tom and I often talk of this. But Tom says it is Parson Eden I have to thank for it, and the lessons he learned in the prison; but I tell him, if he goes so far back as that, he should go farther, and thank Farmer Meadows, for he 'twas that sent Tom to the prison, where he was converted, and became as honest a fellow as any in the world, and a friend to your George as true as steel."

The letter concluded as it began, with thanks to Heaven, and bidding Susan expect his happy return in six months after this letter. In short, the letter was one "Hurrah!" tempered with simple piety and love.

Meadows turned cold as death in reading it. At the part where Farmer Meadows was referred to as the first link in the golden chain, he dashed it to the ground and raised his foot to trample on it, but forbore, lest he should dirty a thing that must go to Susan.

Then he walked the room in great agitation.

"Too late, George Fielding," he cried aloud, "too late! I can't shift my heart like a weathercock to suit the changes in your luck. You have been feeding me with hopes till I can't live without them. I never longed for a thing yet but what I got it, and I'll have this, though I trample a hundred George Fieldings dead on my way to it. Now let me think."

He pondered deeply, his great brows knitted and lowered. For full half an hour invention and resource poured scheme after scheme through that teeming brain, and prudence and knowledge of the world sat in severe and cool judgment on each in turn, and dismissed the visionary ones. At last the deep brow began to relax and the eye to kindle; and when he rose to ring the bell his face was a sign-post with "Eureka" written on it in Nature's vivid handwriting. In that hour he had hatched a plot worthy of Machiavel—a plot complex yet clear. A servant-girl answered the bell.

"Tell David to saddle Rachel directly."

And in five minutes Mr. Meadows, with a shirt, a

razor, a comb, and a map of Australia, was galloping by cross-lanes to the nearest railway station. There he telegraphed Mr. Clinton to meet him at Peel's Coffee-house at two o'clock.

The message flashed up to town like lightning. The man followed it slowly like the wind.

CHAPTER LV.

Meadows found Mr. Clinton at Peel's.

"Mr. Clinton, I want a man of intelligence to be at my service for twenty-four hours. I give you the first offer."

Mr. Clinton replied that really he had so many irons in the fire that twenty-four hours——

Meadows put a fifty-pound note on the table.

"Will all your irons iron you out fifty pounds as flat as that?"

"Why, hem!"

"No, nor five. Come, sir, sharp is the word. Can you be my servant for twenty-four hours for fifty pounds, yes or no?"

"Why, this is dramatic—yes!"

"It is half-past two. Between this and four o'clock I must buy a few hundred acres in Australia a fair bargain."

"Humph! Well, that can be done. I know an old fellow that has land in every part of the globe."

"Take me to him."

In ten minutes they were in one of those dingy narrow alleys in the city of London that look the abode of decent poverty, and they could afford to buy Grosvenor Square for their stables; and Mr. Clinton introduced his friend to a blear-eyed merchant in a large room papered with maps; the windows were encrusted; mustard and cress might have been grown from them. Beauty in clean linen collar and wristbands would have shone here with intolerable lustre, but the blear-eyed merchant did not come out bright by contrast; he had taken the local colour. You could see him, and that was all. He was like a partridge in a furrow. A snuff-coloured man; coat rusty all but the collar, and that greasy; poor as its colour was, his linen had thought it worth emulating; blackish

nails, cotton wipe, little bald place on head, but didn't shine for the same reason the windows didn't. Mr. Clinton approached this "dhirrrty money," this rusty coin, in the spirit of flunkeyism.

"Sir," said he in a low, reverential tone, "this party is disposed to purchase a few hundred acres in the colonies."

Mr. Rich looked up from his desk and pointed with a sweep of his pen to the walls.

"There are the maps: the red crosses are my land. They are numbered. Refer to the margin of map, and you will find the acres and the latitude and longitude calculated to a fraction. When you have settled in what part of the world you buy, come to me again; time is gold."

And the blear-eyed merchant wrote and sealed and filed, and took no notice of his customers. They found red crosses in several of the United States, in Canada, in Borneo, in nearly all the colonies, and as luck would have it they found one small cross within thirty miles of Bathurst, and the margin described it as five hundred acres. Mr. Meadows stepped towards the desk.

"I have found a small property near Bathurst."

"Bathurst? where is that?"

"In Australia."

"Suit?"

"If the price suits. What is the price, sir?"

"The books must tell us that."

Mr. Rich stretched out his arm and seized a ledger and gave it to Meadows.

"I have but one price for land, and that is five per cent. profit on my outlay. Book will tell you what it stands me in; you can add five per cent. to that, and take the land away or leave it."

With this curt explanation Mr. Rich resumed his work.

"It seems you gave five shillings an acre, sir," said Mr. Clinton. "Five times five hundred shillings, one hundred and twenty-five pounds. Interest at five per cent., six pounds five."

"When did I buy it?" asked Mr. Rich.

"Oh, when did you buy it, sir?"

Mr. Rich snatched the book a little pettishly and gave it to Meadows.

"You make the calculation," said he; "the figures are all there. Come to me when you have made it."

The land had been bought twenty-seven years and some months ago. Mr. Meadows made the calculation in a turn of the hand and announced it. Rich rang a hand-bell. Another snuffy figure with a stoop and a bald head and a pen came through a curtain.

"Jones, verify that calculation."

"Penny halfpenny twopence, penny halfpenny twopence. Mum, mum! halfpenny wrong, sir."

"There is a halfpenny wrong!" cried Mr. Rich to Meadows with a most injured air.

"There is, sir," said Meadows, "but it is on the right side for you. I thought I would make it even money against myself."

"There are only two ways, wrong and right," was the reply. "Jones, make it right. There, that is the price for the next half-hour; after business hours to-day add a day's interest; and, Jones, if he does not buy, write your calculation into the book with date, save time, next customer comes for it."

"You need not trouble, Mr. Jones," said Meadows. "I take the land. Here is two hundred and fifty pounds—that is rather more than half the purchase money."

"Jones, count."

"When can I have the deeds?"

"Ten to-morrow."

"Receipt for two hundred and fifty pounds," said Meadows, falling into the other's key.

"Jones, write receipt—two five nought."

"Write me an agreement to sell," proposed Meadows.

"No, you write it; I'll sign it. Jones, enter transaction in the books. Have you anything to do, young gentleman?" addressing Clinton.

"No, sir."

"Then draw this pen through the two crosses on the map and margin. Good-morning, gentlemen."

And the money-making machine rose and dismissed them, as he had received them, with a short, sharp, business congé.

Ye fair, who turn a shop head over heels, maul sixty yards of ribbon and buy six, which being sent home, insatiable becomes your desire to change it for other six, which you had fairly, closely, and with all the powers of your mind compared with it during the seventy minutes the purchase occupied; let me respectfully inform you that

the above business took just eight minutes, and that "when it was done 'twas done" (*Shakespeare*).

"You have given too much, my friend," said Mr. Clinton.

"Come to my inn," was all the reply. "This is the easy part; the game is behind."

After dinner—"Now," said Meadows, "business: do you know any respectable firm disposed towards speculation in mines?"

"Plenty."

"Any that are looking towards gold?"

"Why, no. Gold is a metal that ranks very low in speculation. Stop, yes; I know one tip-top house that has gone a little way in it, but they have burned their fingers, so they will go no further."

"You are wrong; they will be eager to go on—first to recover the loss on that article of account, and next to show their enemies, and in particular such of them as are their friends, that they didn't blunder. You will go to them to-morrow and ask if they can allow you a commission for bringing them an Australian settler on whose land gold has been found."

"Now, my good sir," began Mr. Clinton a little superciliously, "that is not the way to gain the ear of such a firm as that. The better way will be for you to show me your whole design and leave me to devise the best means for carrying it into effect."

Up to this moment Meadows had treated Mr. Clinton with a marked deference, as from yeoman to gentleman. The latter, therefore, was not a little surprised when the other turned sharp on him thus: "This won't do; we must understand one another. You think you are the man of talent and I am the clodhopper. Think so to-morrow night; but for the next twenty-four hours you must keep that notion out of your head, or you will bitch my schemes and lose your fifty pounds. Look here, sir. You began life with ten thousand pounds; you have been all your life trying all you know to double it, and where is it? The pounds are pence, and the pence on the road to farthings. I started with a whip and a smock-frock and this," touching his head, "and I have fifty thousand pounds in Government securities. Which is the able man of these two—the bankrupt that talks like an angel and loses the game, or the wise man that quietly wins it and pockets what all the earth are grappling with him for?

So much for that. And now, which is master—the one who pays or the one who is paid? I am not a liberal man, sir; I am a man that looks at every penny. I don't give fifty pounds. I sell it. That fifty pounds is the price of your vanity for twenty-four hours. I take a day's loan of it. You are paid fifty pounds per diem to see that there is more brains in my little finger than in all your carcass. See it for twenty-four hours or I won't fork out, or don't see it but obey me as if you did see it. You shan't utter a syllable or move an inch that I have not set down for you. Is this too hard? then accept ten pounds for to-day's work, and let us part before you bungle your master's game, as you have done your own."

Mr. Clinton was red with mortified vanity, but forty pounds! He threw himself back in his chair.

"This is amusing," said he. "Well, sir, I will act as if you were Solomon and I nobody. Of course under these circumstances no responsibility rests with me."

"You are wasting my time with your silly prattle," said Meadows very sternly. "Man alive! you never made fifty pounds cash since you were calved. It comes to your hand to-day, and even then you must chatter and jaw instead of saying yes, and closing your fingers on it like a vice."

"Yes!" shouted Clinton; "there."

"Take that quire," said Meadows sharply. "Now I'll dictate the very words you are to say; learn them off by heart and don't add a syllable or subtract one, or—no fifty pounds."

Meadows being a general by nature (not Horse Guards), gave Clinton instructions down to the minutest matters of detail, and he whose life had been spent in proving he would succeed—and failing—began to suspect the man who had always succeeded might perhaps have had something to do with his success. Next morning, well primed by Meadows, Mr. Clinton presented himself to Messrs. Bradthwaite & Stevens, and requested a private audience. He inquired whether they were disposed to allow him a commission if he would introduce them to an Australian settler on whose land gold had been discovered. The two members of the firm looked at one another. After a pause one of them said—

"Commission really must depend on how such a thing turned out. They had little confidence in such statements, but would see the settler and put some questions to him."

Clinton went out and introduced Meadows. This happened just as Meadows had told him it would. Outside the door Mr. Meadows suddenly put on a rustic carriage, and so came in and imitated natural shyness with great skill; he had to be twice asked to sit down. The firm cross-examined him. He told them gold had been discovered within a stone's-throw of his land, thirty miles from Bathurst; that his friends out there had said, go home to England, and they will give you a heavy price for your land now; that he did hope to get a heavy price, and so be able to live at home—didn't want to go out there again; that the land was worth money, for there was no more to be sold in that part; Government land all round, and they wouldn't sell, for he had tried them (his sharp eye had seen this fact marked on Mr. Rich's map).

"Well," said the senior partner, "we have information that gold has been discovered in that district; the report came here two days ago by the *Anne Amelia*. But the account is not distinct as yet. We do not hear on whose land it is found, if at all. I presume you have not seen gold found."

"Could I afford to leave my business out there and come home on a speculation?"

The eyes of the firm began to glitter.

"Have you got any gold to show us?"

"Nothing to speak of, sir; only what they chucked me for giving them a good dinner. But they are shovelling it about like grains of wheat, I assure you." The firm became impatient.

"Show us what they gave you as the price of a dinner?"

Meadows dug into a deep pocket, and chased into a corner, and caught and produced a little nugget of quartz and gold worth about four pounds, also another of somewhat less value.

"They don't look handsome, gents," said he, "but you may see the stuff glitter here and there; and here is some of the dust. I had to buy this—gave them fifty shillings an ounce for it. I wish I had bought a hundredweight, for they tell me it is worth three pound ten here."

"May we inspect these specimens?"

"Why not, sir? I'll trust it with you: I wouldn't with everybody, though."

The partners retired with the gold, tested it with muriatic

acid, weighed it, and after a short, excited interview, one of them brought it back, and asked with great nonchalance the price of the land.

Meadows hung his head. "Twenty thousand pounds."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" and the partner laughed in his face.

"I don't wonder you are surprised, sir. I wonder at myself asking so much. Why, before this if you had offered me five thousand, I would have jumped into your arms, as the saying is; but they all say I ought to have twenty thousand, and they have talked to me till they make me greedy."

The partner retired and consulted, and the firm ended by offering ten thousand.

"I am right down ashamed to say no," was the answer, "but I suppose I must not take it."

The firm undertook to prove that it was a magnificent offer. Meadows offered no resistance, he thought so too; but he must not take it, everybody told him it was worth more. At last, when his hand was on the door, they offered him twelve thousand five hundred.

He begged to consider of it. No! they were peremptory. If he was off, they were off. He looked this way and that way with a frightened air.

"What shall I do, sir?" said he helplessly to Clinton, and nudged him secretly.

"Take it and think yourself very lucky," said that gentleman, exchanging a glance with the firm.

"Well, then, if you say so, I will. You shall have it, gentlemen, five hundred acres in two lots—four hundred and one hundred."

Clinton, acting on his secret instructions, now sought a private interview with the firm.

"I am to have a commission, gentlemen?"

"Yes, fifty pounds; but really we can hardly afford it."

"Well, then, as you give me an interest in it, I say—pin him."

"Why?"

"Don't you see he is one of those soft fellows who listen to everybody. If he goes away, and they laugh at him for not getting more for it, I really could hardly answer for his ever coming back here." The firm came in cheerfully.

"Well, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Not Mr., sir. Crawley—plain John Crawley."

"We will determine this affair with you. We will have a contract of sale drawn up and make you an advance. When can you give us the title-deeds?"

"In a couple of hours, if the lawyer is at home."

"By the bye, you will not object to draw upon us at three months for one-half of the money?"

"No, sir. I should say by the look of you you were as good as the bank."

"The other half by cheque in two hours."

The parties signed the contract respectively.

Then Meadows and Clinton went off to the Five per Center, completed with him, got the title-deeds, brought them, received cheque and accepted draft. Clinton, by Meadows' advice, went in and dunned for his commission then and there and got it, and the confederates went off and took a hasty dinner together. After dinner they settled.

"As you showed me how to get this commission out of them, it belongs to you," said Clinton sorrowfully.

"It does, sir. Give it to me. I return it you, sir—do me the favour to accept it."

"You are very generous, Mr. Meadows."

"And here is the other fifty you have earned."

"Thank you, my good sir. Are you satisfied with the day's work?"

"Amply, sir. Your skill and ingenuity brought us through triumphant," said Meadows, resuming the deferential since he risked nothing by it now.

"Well, I think I managed it pretty well. By the bye, that gold you showed them, was it really gold?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, because I thought——"

"No, sir, you did not. A man of your ability knows I would not risk ten thousand pounds for want of a purchase I could not lose ten shillings by. Ore is not a fancy article."

"Oh! ah! yes, very true; no, of course not. One question more. Where did the gold come from?"

"California."

"But I mean, how did you get it?"

"I bought it out of a shop-window those two knowing ones pass twice every day of their lives."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"*You* pass it oftener than that, sir. Excuse me, sir; I

must catch the train. But one word before I go. My name must never be mentioned in this business."

"Very well; it never shall transpire, upon my honour."

Meadows felt pretty safe. As he put on his greatcoat he thought to himself, "When the story is blown and laughed over, this man's vanity will keep my name out of it. He won't miss a chance of telling the world how clever he is. My game is to pass for honest, not for clever, no thank you."

"Good-bye, sir," was his last word. "It is you for hookwinking them."

"Ha! ha! ha! Good-bye, farmer" (in a patronising tone).

Soon after this Meadows was in a corner of a railway carriage, twelve thousand four hundred and fifty pounds in his pocket, and the second part of his great complex scheme boiling and bubbling in his massive head. There he sat silent as the grave, his hat drawn over his powerful brows that were knitted all the journey by one who never knitted them in vain.

He reached home at eight, and sat down to his desk and wrote for more than half an hour. Then he sealed up the paper, and when Crawley came he found him walking up and down the room. At a silent gesture Crawley took a chair and sat quivering with curiosity. Meadows walked in deep thought.

"You demanded my confidence. It is a dangerous secret, for once you know it, you must serve me with red-hot zeal or be my enemy, and be crushed out of life like a blind-worm or an adder, Peter Crawley."

"I know that, dear sir," assented Peter ruefully.

"First, how far have you guessed?"

"I guess Mr. Levi is somehow against us."

"He is," replied Meadows carelessly.

"Then that is a bad job. He will beat us. He is as cunning as a fox."

Meadows looked up contemptuously, but as he could not afford to let such a sneak as Crawley think him anything short of invincible, he said coolly, "He is, and I have measured cunning with a fox."

"You have? That must have been a tight match."

"A fox used to take my chickens one hard winter—an old fox, cautious and sly as the Jew you rate so high. The men sat up with guns for him—no; a keeper set traps

in a triangle for him—no. He had the eye of a hawk, the ear of a hare, and his own nose. He would have the chickens, and he would not get himself into trouble. The women complained to me of the fox. I turned a ferret loose into the rabbit-hutch, and in half a minute there was as nice a young rabbit dead as ever you saw."

"Lookee there now!" cried Crawley.

"I choked the ferret off, but never touched the rabbit. I took the rabbit with a pair of tongs; the others had handled their baits, and pug crept round 'em and nosed the trick. I poured twenty drops of croton-oil into the little hole ferret had made in bunny's head, and I dropped him in the grass near pug's track. Next morning rabbit had been drawn about twenty yards, and the hole in his head was three times as big. Pug went the nearest way to blood—went in at ferret's hole. I knew he would."

"Yes, sir! yes! yes! yes! and there lay the fox."

"No signs of him. Then I said, 'Go to the nearest water—croton-oil makes 'em dry.' They went along the brook, and on the very bank there lay an old dog-fox blown up like a bladder, as big as a wolf and as dead as a herring. Now for the Jew. Look at that;" and he threw him a paper.

"Why, this is the judgment on which I arrested Will Fielding, and here is the acceptance."

"Levi bought them to take the man out of my power. He left them with old Cohen. I have got them again, you see, and got young Fielding in my power, spite of his foxy friend."

"Capital, sir, capital!" cried the admiring Crawley. He then looked at the reconquered documents. "Ah!" said he spitefully, "how I wish I could alter one of these names—only one!"

"What d'ye mean?"

"I mean that I'd give fifty pound (if I had it) if it was but that brute George Fielding that was in our power instead of this fool William."

Meadows opened his eyes: "Why?"

"Because he put an affront upon me," was the somewhat sulky reply.

"What was that?"

"Oh, no matter, sir!"

"But it is matter. Tell me. I am that man's enemy."

"Then I am in luck. You are just the enemy I wish him."

"What was the affront?"

"He called me a pettifogger."

"Oh, is that all?"

"No; he discharged me from visiting his premises."

"That was not very polite."

"And threatened to horsewhip me next time I came there."

"Oh, is that where the shoe pinches?"

"No, it is not!" cried Crawley almost in a shriek; "but he altered his mind, and did horsewhip me then and there, curse him!"

Meadows smiled grimly. He saw his advantage. "Crawley," said he quickly, "he shall rue the day he lifted his hand over you. You want to see to the bottom of me!"

"Oh, Mr. Meadows, that is too far for the naked eye to see," was the despondent reply.

"Not when it suits my book. I am going to keep my promise and show you my heart."

"Ah!"

"Listen, and hear the secret of my life. Are you listening?"

"What do you think, sir?" was the tremulous answer.

"I—love—Miss—Merton," and for once his eyes sunk before Crawley's.

"Sir! you—love—a—woman?"

"Not as libertines love, nor as boys flirt and pass on. Heaven have mercy on me, I love her with all my heart and soul and brain! I love her with more force than such as you can hate!"

"The deuce you do!"

"I love the sweetheart—of the man—who lashed you—like a dog." Crawley winced and rubbed his hands. "And your fortune is made if you help me to win her." Crawley rubbed his hands. "Old Merton has promised the woman I love to this George Fielding, if he comes back with a thousand pounds."

"Don't you be frightened, sir; that he will never do."

"Will he not? Read this letter."

"Ah! the letter that put you out so. Let me see! Mum! mum! Found gold! Pheugh! pheugh! pheeeugh!!"

"Crawley, most men reading that letter would have given in then and there, and not fought against such luck

as this. I only said to myself, 'Then it will cost me ten thousand pounds to win the day.' Well, between yesterday eleven forenoon and this hour I made the ten thousand pounds." He told him briefly how.

"Beautiful, sir! beautiful! What, did you make the ten thousand out of your own rival's letter?"

"Yes, I taxed the enemy for the expenses of the war."

"Oh, Mr. Meadows, what a fool, what a villain I was to think Mr. Levi was as great a man as you! I must have been under a hallucination."

"Crawley, the day that John and Susan Meadows walk out of church, man and wife, I put a thousand pounds into your hand and set you up in any business you like—in any honest business, for from that day our underhand dealings must end. The husband of that angel must never grind the poor or wrong a living creature. If Heaven consents to my being happy in this way, the least I can do is to walk straight and straightforward the rest of my days, and I will, s'help me God."

"That is fair. I knew you were a great man, but I had no idea you were such a good one."

"Crawley," said the other, with a sudden gloomy misgiving, "I am trying to cheat the devil. I fear no man can do that," and he hung his head.

"No ordinary man, sir," replied the parasite, "but your skill has no bounds. Your plan, sir, at once, that I may co-operate and not thwart your great skill through ignorance."

"My plan has two hands: one must work here—the other a great many miles from here. If I could but cut myself in two, all would be well—but I can't. I must be one hand, you the other. I work thus: Post-office here is under my thumb. I stop all letters from him to her. Presently comes a letter from Australia telling, among pork, grains, etc., how George Fielding has made his fortune and married a girl out there."

"But who is to write the letter?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Haven't an idea. She won't believe it."

"Not at first, perhaps, but when she gets no more letters from him she will."

"So she will. So then you will run him down to her."

"Not such a fool; she would hate me. I shall never mention his name. I make one of my tools hang jail

over old Merton. Susan thinks George married. I strike upon her pique and her father's distress. I ask him for his daughter. Offer to pay my father-in-law's debts and start him afresh."

"Beautiful! beautiful!"

"Susan likes me already. I tell her all I suffered silent, while she was on with George. I press her to be mine. She will say no perhaps three or four times, but the fifth she will say yes!"

"She will! You are a great man."

"And she will be happy."

"Can't see it."

"A man that marries a virtuous woman and loves her is no man at all if he can't make her love him; they can't resist our stronger wills except by flight or by leaning upon another man. I'll be back directly."

Mr. Meadows returned with a bottle of wine and two glasses. Crawley was surprised. This was a beverage he had never seen his friend drink or offer him. Another thing puzzled him. When Mr. Meadows came back with the wine he had not so much colour as usual in his face —not near so much.

"Crawley," said Meadows in a low voice, "suppose while I am working, this George Fielding were to come home with money in both pockets?"

"He would kick it all down in a moment."

"I am glad you see that. Then you see one hand is not enough; another must be working far away."

"Yes, but I don't see——"

"You will see. Drink a glass of wine with me, my good friend. Your health."

"Same to you, sir."

"Is it to your mind?"

"Elixir! this is the stuff that sharpens a chap's wits and puts courage in his heart."

"I brought it for that. You and I have no chicken's play on hand. Another glass."

"Success to your scheme, sir."

"Crawley, George Fielding must not come back this year with one thousand pounds."

"No, he must not—thank you, sir, your health. Mustn't! he shan't; but how on earth can you prevent him?"

"That paper will prevent him: it is a paper of instructions. My very brains lie in that paper—put it in your pocket."

"In my pocket, sir? Highly honoured—shall be executed to the letter. What wine!"

"And this is a cheque-book."

"No! is it though?"

"You will draw on me for one hundred pounds per month."

"No! shall I though? Sir, you are a king!"

"Of which you will account for fifty pounds only."

"Liberal, sir; as I said before, liberal as running water."

"You are going a journey."

"Am I? Well, don't you turn pale for that—I'll come back to you—nothing but death shall part us. Have a drop of this, sir; it will put blood into your cheek and fire into your heart. That is right. Where am I going, sir?"

"What, don't you know?"

"No, nor I don't care, so long as it is in your service I go."

"Still it is a long journey."

"Oh, is it? Your health then, and my happy return."

"You are not afraid of the sea or the wind?"

"I am afraid of nothing but your wrath, and—and—the law. The sea be hanged and the wind be blowed! When I see your talent and energy, and hold your cheque-book in my hand and your instructions in my pocket, I feel to play at football with the world. When shall I start?"

"To-morrow morning."

"To-night if you like. Where am I to go to?"

"To AUSTRALIA!"

That single word suspended the glass going to Crawley's lips, and the chuckle coming from them. A dead silence on both sides followed it. And now *two* colourless faces looked into one another's eyes across the table.

CHAPTER LVI.

THREE days the gold-finders worked alone upon the pre-Adamite river's bed. At evening on the third day they looked up and saw a figure perched watching them with a pipe in its mouth. It disappeared in silence. Next day there were men on their knees beside them digging, scraping, washing, and worshipping gold. Soon they

were the centre of a group—soon after of a humming mob. As if the birds had really carried the secret north, south, east, and west, men swarmed and buzzed and settled like locusts on the gold-bearing tract. They came in panting, gleaming, dusty, and travel-stained, and flung off their fatigue at sight, and running up, dived into the gullies, and plied spade and pickaxe with clenched teeth and throbbing hearts. They seamed the face of Nature for miles; turned the streams to get at their beds; pounded and crushed the solid rock to squeeze out the subtle stain of gold it held in its veins—hacked through the crops as through any other idle impediment; pecked and hewed, and fought and wrestled with Nature for the treasure that lay so near, yet in so tight a grip.

We take off our clothes to sleep and put them on to play at work, but these put on their clothes to sleep in, and tore them off at peep of day, and labour was red-hot till night came and cooled it; and in this fight, lives fell as quickly as in actual war, and by the same enemy—disease. Small wonder, when hundreds and hundreds wrought the live-long day, one-half in icy water, the other half dripping with sweat.

Men rotted like sheep, and died at the feet of that gold whom they stormed here in his fortress; and some, alas! met a worse fate; for that befell which the world has seen in every age and land where gold has come to light upon a soil: men wrestling fiercely with Nature jostled each other; cupidity inflamed hate to madness, and human blood flowed like water over that yellow dirt. And now from this one burning spot gold-fever struck inwards to the heart of the land, burned its veins, and maddened its brain; the workman sold his tools, bought a spade and a pickaxe, and fled to the gold; the lawyer flung down his parchment and off to the gold; the penny-a-liner his brass pen and off to a greater wonder than he had ever fabricated; the schoolmaster, to whom little boys were puzzling out—

"Quid non mortalia pectora cogis
Auri sacra fames——"

made the meaning perfectly clear—he dropped ferrule and book and ran with the national hunt for gold. Shops were closed for want of buyers and sellers; the grass

crept up between the paving-stones in great thoroughfares; outward bound ships lay deserted and helpless in the roads; the wilderness was peopled and the cities desolate; commerce was paralysed, industry contracted; the wise and good trembled for the destiny of the people, the Government trembled for itself—idle fear. That which shook this colony for a moment settled it firm as a granite mountain, and made it great with a rapidity that would have astounded the puny ages cast appeals to as the days of wonders.

The *sacra fames* was not Australian, but human; and so at the first whisper of gold the old nations poured the wealth they valued—their food and clothes and silk and coin—and the prime treasure they valued not their men—into that favoured land.

Then did great Labour, insulted and cheated so many years in narrow, over-crowded corners of the huge, unpeopled globe, lift his bare arm and cry, "Who bids for this?" and a dozen gloved hands jumped and clutched at the prize; and in bargains where a man went on one side and money on the other, the money had to say "Thank you" over it, instead of the man.

But still though the average value of labour was now full as high in the cities as in the mine, men flowed to the desert and the gold, tempted by the enormous prizes there, that lay close to all and came to fortune's favourites. Hence a new wonder, a great moral phenomenon, the world had never seen before on such a wide scale. At a period of unparalleled civilisation and refinement, society, with its artificial habits and its jealous class distinctions on its back, took a sudden unprepared leap from the heights it had been centuries constructing into a gold-mine; it emerged, its delicate fabric crushed out of all recognisable shape, its petty prides annihilated, and even its just distinctions turned topsy-turvy; for mind is really more honourable than muscle, yet when these two met in a gold-mine it fared ill with mind. Classical and mathematical scholars joined their forces with navvies to dig gold, and nearly always the scholars were found after a while cooking, shoe-cleaning, and doing generally menial offices for the navvies.

Those who had no learning, but had good birth, genteel manners, and kid gloves and feeble loins, sank lower, and became the dregs of gold-digging society ere a week's

digging had passed over their backs. Not that all wit yielded to muscle. Low cunning often held its own; hundreds of lazy leeches settled on labour's bare arm and bled it. Such as could minister to the diggers physical needs, appetites, vices, had no need to dig; they made the diggers work for them, and took toll of the precious dust as it fell into their hands.

One brute that could not spell chicory to save himself from the gallows, cleared two thousand pounds a month by selling it, and hot water, at a pinch a cup. Thus ran his announcement—"Cofy allus rady." Meantime Trigonometry was frying steaks, and on Sunday blacking boots. After a while lucky diggers returned to the towns clogged with gold, and lusting and panting for pleasure. They hired carriages and sweethearts, and paraded the streets all day, crying, "We be the hairy-stocracy now!"

The shopkeepers bowed down and did them homage. Even here Nature had her say. The sexes came out—the men sat in the carriages in their dirty fustian and their chequered shirts and no jacket; their inamoratas beside them glittered in silk and satin; and some fiend told these poor women it was genteel to be short-sighted; so they all bought gold spy-glasses, and spied without intermission.

Then the old colonial aristocracy, who had been born in broadcloth and silk, and, unlike the new, had not been transported, but only their papas and mammas, were driven to despair; but at last they hit upon a remedy. They would be distinguised by hook or by crook, and the only way left now was always to go on foot. So they walked the pavement—wet or dry, nothing could induce them to enter the door of a carriage. *Item:* they gave up being short-sighted; the few who, for reasons distinct from fashion, could not resign the habit, concealed it, as if it was a defect instead of a beauty. The struggle of classes in the towns, with its hundred and one incidents, was an excellent theme for satire of the highest class. How has it escaped? Is it that even satire, low and easy art, is not so low and easy as detraction. But these are the outskirts of a great theme. The theme itself belonged not to little satire, but to great epic.

In the sudden return of a society, far more complex, artificial, and conventional than Pericles ever dreamed of, to elements more primitive than Homer had to deal with; in this with its novelty, and nature, and strange contrasts; in

the old barbaric force and native colour of the passions as they burst out undisguised around the gold; in the hundred and one personal combats and trials of cunning; in a desert peopled and cities thinned by the magic of cupidity; in a huge army collected in ten thousand tents, not as heretofore by one man's constraining will, but each human unit spurred into the crowd by his own heart; in "the siege of gold," defended stoutly by Rock and Disease; in the world-wide effect of the discovery, the peopling of the earth at last according to Heaven's long-published and resisted design; fate offered poetry a theme broad and high yet piquant, and various as the dolphin and the rainbow.

I cannot sing this song, because I am neither Lamartine, nor Hugo, nor Walter Scott. I cannot hum this song, because the severe conditions of my story forbid me even to make the adventurous attempt. I am here to tell not the great tale of gold, but the little story of how Susan Merton was affected thereby. Yet it shall never be said that my pen passed close to a great man or a great thing without a word of homage and sympathy to set against the sneers of grovelling criticasters, the blindness of self-singing poet-asters, and the national itch for detraction of all great things and men that live, and deification of dead dwarfs.

God has been bountiful to the human race in this age. Most bountiful to poets; most bountiful to all of us who have a spark of nobleness in ourselves, and so can see and revere at sight the truly grand and noble (any snob can do this after it has been settled two hundred years by other minds that he is to do it). He has given us warlike heroes more than we can count—far less honour as they deserve; and valour as full of variety as courage in the "Iliad" is monotonous—except when it takes to its heels.

He has given us one hero, a better man than Hector or Achilles. For Hector ran away from a single man; this hero was never known to run away at all. Achilles was a better egotist than soldier; wounded in his personal vanity, he revenged himself, not on the man who had wronged him—prudence forbade—but on the army and on his country. This antique hero sulked; my hero, deprived of the highest command, retained a higher still—the command that places the great of heart above all petty personal feeling. He was a soldier, and could not look from his tent on battle and not plunge into it. What true soldier ever could? He was not a Greek, but a Frenchman, and could

not love himself better than his country. Above all, he was not Achilles, but Canrobert.

He has given us to see Nineveh disinterred by an English hero. He has given us to see the North-west Passage forced, and winter bearded on his everlasting throne by another. (Is it the hero's fault if self and snowdrop-singing poetasters cannot see this feat with the eyes of Camoens?)

He has given us to see Titans enslaved by man; steam harnessed to our carriages and ships; galvanism tamed into an alphabet—a gamut, and its metal harp-strings stretched across the earth malgre mountains and the sea, and so men's minds defying the twin monsters Time and Space; and now, gold revealed in the east and west at once, and so mankind, now first in earnest, peopling the enormous globe. Yet old women and children of the pen say this is a bad, a small, a lifeless, an unpoetic age: and they are not mistaken. For they lie.

As only tooth-stoppers, retailers of conventional phrases, links in the great cuckoo-chain, universal pill-vendors, Satan, and ancient booksellers, ancient nameless hacks can lie, they lie.

It is they who are *small-eyed.* Now, as heretofore, weaklings cannot rise high enough to take a bird's-eye view of their own age and calculate its dimensions.

The age, smaller than epochs to come, is a giant compared with the past, and full of mighty materials for any great pen in prose or verse.

My little friends, aged nineteen and downwards—fourscore and upwards—who have been lending your ears to the stale little cant of every age as chanted in this one by Buffo-Bombastes and other foaming-at-the-pen old women of both sexes—take by way of antidote to all that poisonous, soul-withering drivel ten honest words. I say before heaven and earth, that the man who could grasp the facts of this day and do an immortal writer's duty by them, *i.e.*, so paint them as a later age will be content to engrave them, would be the greatest writer ever lived: such is the force, weight, and number of the grand topics that lie this day on the world's face. I say that he who has eyes to see may now see greater and far more poetic things than human eyes have seen since our Lord and His apostles and His miracles left the earth.

It is very hard to write a good book or a good play, or to invent a good picture, and having invented, paint it. But

it always was hard, except to those to whom it was impossible. Bunglers will not mend matters by blackening the great canvases they can't paint on, nor the impotent become males by detraction.

"Justice!" When we write a story or sing a poem of the great nineteenth century, there is but one fear—not that our theme will be beneath us, but we miles below it; that we shall lack the comprehensive vision a man must have from heaven to catch the historical, the poetic, the lasting features of the Titan events that stride so swiftly past IN THIS GIGANTIC AGE.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE life of George Fielding and Thomas Robinson for months could be composed in a few words—tremendous work from sunrise to sundown, and on Sunday welcome rest, a quiet pipe, and a book. At night they slept in a good tent, with Carlo at their feet, and a little bag between them; this bag never left their sight: it went out to their work, and in to sleep.

It is dinner-time; George and Tom are snatching a mouthful, and a few words over it.

"How much do you think we are, Tom?"

"Hush! don't speak so loud, for Heaven's sake," he added in a whisper; "not a penny under seven hundred pounds' worth."

George sighed. "It is slower work than I thought; but it is my fault, I am so unlucky."

"Unlucky! and we have not been eight months at it."

"But one party near us cleared four thousand pounds at a haul; one thousand pounds apiece—ah!"

"And hundreds have only just been able to keep themselves. Come, you must not grumble; we are high above the average."

George persisted. "The reason we don't get on is, we try for nothing better than dust. You know what you told me, that the gold was never created in dust, but in masses like all metals; the dust is only a trifle that has been washed off the bulk. Then you said we ought to track the gold-dust coarser and coarser, till we traced the metal to its home in the great rocks."

"Ay! ay! I believe I used to talk so, but I am wiser

now. Look here, George; no doubt the gold was all in block when the world started, but how many million years ago was that? This is my notion, George: at the beginning of the world the gold was all solid, at the end it is all to be dust. Now which are we nearer, the end or the beginning?"

"Not knowing, can't say, Tom."

"Then I can, for his reverence told me. We are fifty times nearer the end than the beginning; follows there is fifty times as much gold dust in nature as solid gold."

"What a head you ha' got, Tom! But I can't take it up so: seems to me this dust is like the grain that is shed from a ripe crop before it comes to the sickle. Now if we could trace——"

"How can you trace syrup up to the lump when the lump is all turned to syrup?" George held his peace—shut up but not convinced.

"Hollo! you two lucky ones," cried a voice distant about thirty yards; "will you buy our hole? It is breaking our hearts here."

Robinson went up and found a large hole excavated to a great depth; it was yielding literally nothing, and this determined that paradoxical personage to buy it if it was cheap. "What there is must be somewhere all in a lump." He offered ten pounds for it, which was eagerly snapped at.

"Well done, Gardiner," said one of the band. "We would have taken ten shillings for it," explained he to Robinson.

Robinson paid the money, and let himself down into the hole with his spade. He drove his spade into the clay, and the bottom of it just reached the rock; he looked up. "I would have gone just one foot deeper before I gave in," said he. He called George. "Come, George, we can know our fate in ten minutes."

They shovelled the clay away down to about one inch above the rock, and there in the white clay they found a little bit of gold as big as a pin's head.

"We have done it this time," cried Robinson. "Shave a little more off, not too deep, and save the clay." This time a score of little nuggets came to view sticking in the clay; no need for washing; they picked them out with their knives.

The news soon spread, and a multitude buzzed round the hole and looked down on the men picking out peas and beans of pure gold with their knives. Presently a voice cried, "Shame! give the men back their hole!"

"Gammon!" cried others; "they paid for a chance, and it turned out well; a bargain is a bargain."

Gardiner and his mates looked sorrowfully down. Robinson saw their faces, and came out of the hole a moment. He took Gardiner aside and whispered, "Jump into our hole like lightning, it is worth four pound a day."

"God bless you!" said Gardiner. He ran and jumped into the hole just as another man was going to take possession. By diggers' law no party is allowed to occupy two holes.

All that afternoon there was a mob looking down at George and Robinson picking out peas and beans of gold, and envy's satanic fire burned many a heart; these two were picking up at least a hundred pounds an hour.

Now it happened late in the afternoon that a man of shabby figure, evidently not a digger, observing that there was always more or less crowd in one place, shambled up and looked down with the rest; as he looked down, George happened to look up; the new-comer drew back hastily. After that his proceedings were singular—he remained in the crowd more than two hours, not stationary, but winding in and out. He listened to everything that was said, especially if it was muttered and not spoken out; and he peered into every face, and peering into every face, it befell that at last his eye lighted on one that seemed to fascinate him; it belonged to a fellow with a great bull-neck, and hair and beard flowing all into one—a man more like the black-maned lion of North Africa than anything else. But it was not his appearance that fascinated the serpentine one, it was the look he cast down upon those two lucky diggers; a scowl of tremendous hatred—hatred unto death. Instinct told the serpent there must be more in this than extempore envy. He waited and watched, and when the black-maned one moved away, he followed him about everywhere till at last he got him alone. Then he sidled up, and in a cringing way said—

"What luck some men have, don't they!"

The man answered by a fierce grunt. The serpent was half afraid of him, but he went on.

"There will be a good lump of gold in their tent to-night." The other seemed struck with these words.

"They have been lucky a long time," explained the other, "and now this added."

"Well, what about it?"

"Nothing! only I wish somebody else had it instead."

"Why?"

"That is a secret for the present. I only tell you, because I think somehow they are no friends of yours either."

"Perhaps not! what then?"

"Then we might perhaps do business together; it will strike you singular, but I have a friend who would give money to anyone that would take a little from those two."

"Say that again."

"Would give money to anyone that would take it from those two."

"And you won't ask for any share of the swag?"

"Me! I have nothing to do with it."

"Gammon! Well, your friend! will he?"

"Not a farthing!"

"And what will he give, suppose I have a friend that will do the trick?"

"According to the risk."

The man gave a whistle. A fellow with forehead villainously low came from behind some tents.

"What is it, Will?" asked the new-comer.

"A plant."

"This one in it?"

"Yes! This is too public; come to Bevan's store."

CHAPTER LVIII.

"George, I want you to go to Bathurst."

"What for?"

"To buy some things!"

"What things?"

"First of all a revolver; there were fellows about our tent last night creeping and prowling."

"I never heard them."

"No more you would an earthquake; but I heard them and got up, and pointed my revolver at them, so then they cut—all the better for them. We must mind our eye, George; a good many tents are robbed every week, and we are known to have a good swag."

"Well, I must start this moment if I am to be back."

"And take a pound of dust and buy things that we can sell here to a profit."

George came back at night looking rather sheep-faced.

"Tom," said he, "I am afraid I have done wrong. You see there was a confounded auction, and what with the hammer and the folk bidding, and his palaver, I could not help it."

"But what is it you have bought?"

"A bit o' land, Tom."

Robinson groaned; but, recovering himself, he said gaily, "Well, have you brought it with you?"

"No, it is not so small as all that; as nice a bit of grass as ever you saw, Tom, and just outside the town of Bathurst; only I didn't ought to have spent your money as well as my own."

"Stuff and nonsense! I accept the investment. Let me load your new revolver. Now, look at my day's work. I wouldn't take a hundred pounds for these little fellows."

George gloated over the little nuggets, for he saw Susan's eyes in them. To-night she seemed so near. The little bag was placed between them, the day's spoils added to it, and the tired friends were soon asleep.

CHAPTER LIX.

"HELP! help! murder! help! murder!"

Such were the cries that invaded the sleeper's ears in the middle of the night, to which horrible sounds was added the furious barking of Carlo. The men seized their revolvers and rushed out of the tent. At about sixty yards distant they saw a man on the ground struggling under two fellows, and still crying, though more faintly, "Murder" and "Help."

"They are killing him!" cried George, and Robinson and he cocked their revolvers and ran furiously towards the men. But these did not wait the attack. They started up and off like the wind, followed by two shots from Robinson that whistled unpleasantly near them.

"Have they hurt you, my poor fellow?" said Robinson.

The man only groaned for answer. Robinson turned his face up in the moonlight, and recognised a man to whom he had never spoken, but whom his watchful eye had noticed more than once in the mine—it was, in fact, the pedlar Walker.

"Stop, George; I have seen this face in bad company. Oh, back to our tent for your life, and kill any man you see near it."

They ran back. They saw two dark figures melting into the night on the other side the tent. They darted in—they felt for the bag. Gone! They felt convulsively all round the tent. Gone! With trembling hands Robinson struck a light. Gone—the work of months gone in a moment—the hope of a life snatched out of a lover's very hand, and held out a mile off again!

The poor fellows rushed wildly out into the night. They saw nothing but the wretched decoy vanishing behind the nearest tents. They came into the tent again. They sat down and bowed to the blow in silence, and looked at one another, and their lips quivered, and they feared to speak lest they should break into unmanly rage or sorrow. So they sat like stone till daybreak. And when the first streak of twilight came in, George said in a firm whisper, "Take my hand, Tom, before we go to work."

So the two friends sat hand in hand a minute or two; and that hard grip of two working-men's hands, though it was not gently eloquent like beauty's soft expressive palm, did yet say many things good for the heart in this bitter hour.

It said, "A great calamity has fallen; but we do not blame each other, as some turn to directly and do. It is not your fault, George. It is not your fault, Tom."

It said, "We were lucky together; now we are unlucky together—all the more friends. We wrought together; now we have been wronged together—all the more friends." With this the sun rose, and for the first time they crept to their work instead of springing to it.

They still found gold in it. But not quite so abundant or so large. They had raised the cream of it for the thieves. Moreover, a rush had been made to the hole, claims measured off actually touching them; so they could not follow the gold-bearing strata horizontally—it belonged to their neighbours. They worked in silence—they ate their meal in silence. But as they rose to work again, Robinson said very gravely, even solemnly, "George, now I know what an honest man feels when he is robbed of the fruits of his work and his self-denial and his sobriety. If I had known it fifteen years ago, I should never have been a—what I have been."

For two months the friends worked stoutly with leaden

hearts, but did little more than pay their expenses. The bag lay between them light as a feather. One morning Tom said to George, "George, this won't do. I am going prospecting. Moore will lend me his horse for a day."

That day George worked alone. Robinson rode all over the country with a tin pan at his back, and tested all the places that seemed likely to his experienced eye. At night he returned to their tent. George was just lying down.

"No sleep to-night, George," said he, instinctively lowering his voice to a whisper. "I have found surface-gold ten miles to the southward."

"Well, we will go to it to-morrow."

"What, by daylight, watched as we are?—we the two lucky ones," said Robinson bitterly. "No! Wait till the coast is clear—then strike tent and away."

At midnight they stole out of the camp. By peep of day they were in a little dell with a brook running at the bottom of it.

"Now, George, listen to me. Here is ten thousand pounds if we could keep this gully and the creek a fortnight to ourselves."

"Oh, Tom! and we will. Nobody will find us here; it is like a box."

Robinson smiled sadly. The men drove their spades in close to the little hole which Robinson had made prospecting yesterday, and the very first cradleful yielded an ounce of gold-dust extremely small and pure. They found it diffused with wonderful regularity within a few inches of the surface. Here, for the first time, George saw gold-dust so plentiful as to be visible. When a spadeful of the clay was turned up, it glittered all over; when they tore up the grass, which was green as an emerald, specks of bright gold came up clinging to the roots. They fell like spaded tigers on the prey.

"What are you doing, George?"

"Going to light a fire for dinner. We must eat, I suppose, though I do grudge the time."

"We must eat, but not hot."

"Why not?"

"Because if you light a fire the smoke will be seen miles off, and half the diggings will be down upon us. I have brought three days' cold meat—here it is."

"Will this be enough?" asked George simply, his mouth full.

"Yes, it will be enough," replied the other bitterly. "Do you hear that bird, George? They call him a leather-head. What is he singing?"

George laughed. "Seems to me he is saying, 'Off we go! Off we go! Off we go!'"

"That is it. And look now, off he is gone; and what is more, he has gone to tell all the world he saw two men pick up gold like beans."

"Work!" cried George.

That night the little bag felt twice as heavy as last night, and Susan seemed nearer than for many a day. These two worked for their lives. They counted each minute, and George was a Goliath; the soil flew round him like the dust about a winnowing machine: he was working for Susan. Robinson wasted two seconds admiring him.

"Well," said he, "gold puts us all on our mettle, but you beat all ever I saw. You are a man."

It was the morning of the third day, and the friends were filling the little bag fast; and at breakfast George quizzed Robinson's late fears.

"The leather-head didn't tell anybody, for here we are all alone." Robinson laughed.

"But we should not have been if I had let you light a fire. However, I really begin to hope now they will let us alone till we have cleared out the gully. Hollo!"

"What is the matter?"

"Look there, George."

"What is it? Smoke rising down the valley."

"We are done! Didn't I tell you?"

"Don't say so, Tom. Why, it is only smoke, and five miles off."

"What signifies what it is or where it is? It is on the road to us."

"I hope better."

"What is the use of hoping nonsense? Was it there yesterday? Well, then."

"Don't you be faint-hearted," said George. "We are not caught yet. I wonder whether Susan would say it was a sin to try and mislead them?"

"A sin! I wish I knew how; I'd soon see. That was a good notion. This place is five hundred pound a day to us. We must keep it to-day by hook or by crook. Come with me quick. Bring your tools and the bag."

George followed Robinson in utter ignorance of his

design; that worthy made his way as fast as he could towards the smoke. When they got within a mile of it the valley widened, and the smoke was seen rising from the side of the stream. Concealing themselves, they saw two men beating the ground on each side like pointers. Robinson drew back. "They are hunting up the stream," said he; "it is there we must put the stopper on them."

They made eastward for the stream which they had left.

"Come," said Robinson, "here is a spot that looks likely to a novice: dig and cut it up all you can."

George was mystified, but obeyed, and soon the place looked as if men had been at work on it some time. Then Robinson took out a handful of gold-dust, and coolly scattered it over a large heap of mould.

"What are you at? Are you mad, Tom? Why, there goes five pounds. What a sin!"

"Did you never hear of the man that flung away a sprat to catch a whale? Now turn back to our hole. Stop, leave your pickaxe, then they will think we are coming back to work."

In little more than half an hour they were in their little gully working like mad. They ate their dinner working. At five o'clock George pointed out to Robinson no less than seven distinct columns of smoke rising about a mile apart all down the valley.

"Ay!" said Robinson, "those six smokes are hunting the smoke that is hunting us; but we have screwed another day out."

Just as the sun was setting a man came into the gully with a pickaxe on his shoulder.

"Ah! how d'ye do?" said Robinson in a mock friendly accent. "We have been expecting you. Thank you for bringing us our pickaxe." The man gave a sort of rueful laugh, and came and delivered the pick and coolly watched the cradle.

"Why don't you ask what you want to know?" said Robinson.

The man sneered. "Is that the way to get the truth from a digger?" said he.

"It is from me, and the only one."

"Oh, then, what are you doing, mate?"

"About ten ounces of gold per hour." The man's mouth and eyes both opened.

"Come, my lad," said Robertson good-naturedly, "of

course I am not glad you have found us, but since you are come, call your pals—light fires—and work all night. To-morrow it will be too late."

The man whistled. He was soon joined by two more, and afterwards by others. The whole party was eight. A hurried conference took place, and presently the captain, whose name was Ede, came up to Robinson with a small barrel of beer and begged him and his pal to drink as much as they liked. They were very glad of the draught, and thanked the men warmly.

The new-comers took Robinson's advice, lighted large fires, divided their company, and groped for gold. Every now and then came a shout of joy, and, in the light of the fires, the wild figures showed red as blood against the black wall of night, and their excited eyes glowed like carbuncles as they clawed the sparkling dust. George and Robinson, fatigued already by a long day, broke down about three in the morning. They reeled into their tent, dug a hole, put in their gold bag, stamped it down, tumbled dead asleep down over it, and never woke till morn.

Gn 1 r-r-r! gn 1 r-r-r!

"What is the matter, Carlo?" Gn 1 r-r-r.

Hum! hum! hum! Crash! crash

At these sounds Robinson lifted up the corner of his tent. The gully was a-digging. He ran out to see where he was to work, and found the whole soil one enormous tanyard, the pits ten feet square, and so close, there was hardly room to walk to your hole without tumbling into your neighbour's. You had to balance yourself and move like boys going along a beam in a timber-yard. In one of these he found Ede and his gang working. Mr. Ede had acquired a black eye, ditto one of his mates.

"Good-morning, Captain Robinson," said this personage. with a general gaiety of countenance that contrasted most drolly with the mourning an expressive organ had gone into.

"Well, was I right?" asked Robinson, looking ruefully round the crowded digging.

"You were, Captain Robinson, and thank you for last night."

"Well, you have picked up my name somehow. Now, just tell me how you picked up something else. How did you suspect us in this retired spot?"

"We were working just clear of the great digging by

the side of the creek, and doing no good, when your cork came down."

"My cork?"

"Cork out of your bottle."

"I had no bottle. Oh yes! my pal had a bottle of small beer."

"Ah! he must have thrown it into the creek, for a cork came down to us. Then I looked at it, and I said, 'Here is a cork from Moore's store; there is a party working up-stream by this cork.'"

Robinson gave a little groan. "We are never to be at the bottom of gold-digging," said he.

"So we came up the stream, and tried several places as we came, but found nothing; at last we came to your pickaxe and signs of work, so my lads would stay and work there, and I let them an hour or two, and then I said, 'Come now, lads, the party we are after is higher up.'"

"Now, how could you pretend to know that?" inquired Robinson with curiosity.

"Easy enough. The water came down to us thick and muddyish, so I knew you were washing up-stream."

"Confound my stupid head!" cried Robinson; "I deserve to have it cut off, after all my experience." And he actually capered with vexation.

"The best may make a mistake," said the other soothingly. "Well, captain, you did us a good turn last night, so here is your claim. We put your pal's pick in it—here close to us. Oh, there was a lot that made difficulties, but we over-persuaded them."

"Indeed! How?"

"Gave them a hiding, and promised to knock out anyone's brains that went into it. Oh, kindness begets kindness, even in a gold-mine."

"It does," cried Robinson, "and the proof is that I give you the claim. Here, come this way and seem to buy it of me. All their eyes are upon us. Now, split your gang, and four take my claim."

"Well, that is good of you. But what will you do, captain? Where shall you go?" And his eyes betrayed his curiosity.

"Humph! Well, I will tell you on condition that you don't bring two thousand after me again. You should look behind you as well as before, stupid!"

These terms agreed to, Robinson let Ede know that he was going this moment back to the old digging. The other was greatly surprised. Robinson then explained that in the old digging gold lay at various depths, and was inexhaustible; that this afternoon there would be a rush made from it to Robinson's Gully (so the spot where they stood was already called); that thousands of good claims would thus by diggers' law be vacated, and that he should take the best before the rush came back, which would be immediately, since Robinson's Gully would be emptied of its gold in four hours.

"So clear out your two claims," said he. "It won't take you two hours. All the gold lies in one streak four inches deep. Then back after me; I'll give you the office. I'll mark you down a good claim."

Mr. Ede, who was not used to this sort of thing since he fought for gold, wore a ludicrous expression of surprise and gratitude. Robinson read it and grinned superior, but the look rendered words needless, so he turned the conversation.

"How did you get your black eye?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? Fighting with the blackguards for your claim." It was now Robinson's turn to be touched.

"You are a good fellow. You and I must be friends. Ah! if I could but get together about forty decent men like you, and that had got gold to lose."

"Well," said Ede, "why not? Here are eight that have got gold to lose, thanks to you, and your own lot—that makes ten. We could easy make up forty for any good lay; there is my hand for one. What is it?"

Robinson took Ede's hand with a haste and an energy that almost startled him, and his features darkened with an expression unusual now to his good-natured face. "To put down thieving in the camp," said he sternly.

"Ah!" said the other half-sadly (the desirableness of this had occurred to him before now), "but how are we to do that?" asked he incredulously. "The camp is choke-full of them."

Robinson looked blacker, uglier, and more in earnest. So was his answer when it came.

"Make stealing death by the law."

"The law! What law?"

"Lynch!"

CHAPTER LX.

One evening about a fortnight after Robinson's return to the diggings, two men were seated in a small room at Bevan's store. There was little risk of their being interrupted by any honest digger, for it was the middle of the day.

"I know that well enough," growled the black-maned one; "everybody knows the lucky rip has got a heavier swag than ever; but we shan't get it so cheap, if we do at all."

"Why not?"

"He is on his guard now, night and day; and what is more, he has got friends in the mine that would hang me or you either up to dry, if they but caught us looking too near his tent."

"The ruffians! Well, but if he has friends, he has enemies."

"Not so many; none that I know of but you and me: I wonder what he has done to you!"

The other waived this question and replied, "I have found two parties that hate him—two that came in last week."

"Have you? Then, if you are in earnest, make me acquainted with them, for I am weak-handed; I lost one of my pals yesterday."

"Indeed! how?"

"They caught him at work and gave him a rap over the head with a spade. The more —— fool he for being caught. Here is to his memory."

"Ugh! what, is he?—is he——"

"Dead as a herring."

"Where shall we all go to? What lawless fellows these diggers are! I will bring you the men."

For the last two months the serpentine man had wound in and out the camp, poking about for a villain of the darker sort as minutely as Diogenes did for an honest man, and dispensing liquor and watching looks and words. He found rogues galore, and envious spirits that wished the friends ill, but none of them seemed game to risk their lives against two men, one of whom said openly he would kill any stranger he caught in his tent, and whom

some fifty stout fellows called Captain Robinson, and were ready to take up his quarrel like fire. But at last he fell in with two old lags, who had a deadly grudge against the captain, and a sovereign contempt for him into the bargain. By the aid of liquor he wormed out their story. This was the marrow of it: The captain had been their pal, and while they were all three cracking a crib, had with unexampled treachery betrayed them, and got them laid by the heels for nearly a year: in fact, if they had not broken prison they would not have been here now. In short, in less that half an hour he returned with our old acquaintances, brutus and mephistopheles.

These two came half-reluctant, suspicious, and reserved; but at sight of Black Will they were reassured, villain was so stamped on him. With instantaneous sympathy and an instinct of confidence the three compared notes, and showed how each had been aggrieved by the common enemy. Next they held a council of war, the grand object of which was to hit upon some plan of robbing the friends of their new swag.

It was a difficult and very dangerous job. Plans were proposed and rejected, and nothing agreed upon but this, that the men should be carefully watched for days to find out where they kept their gold at night and where by day, and an attempt timed and regulated accordingly. Moreover, the same afternoon a special gang of six was formed, including Walker, which pitiful fox was greatly patronised by the black-maned lion. At sight of him, brutus, who knew him not indeed by name, but by a literary transaction, was for "laying on," but his patron interposed, and having inquired and heard the offence, bellowed with laughter, and condemned the ex-pedlar to a fine of half-a-crown in grog. This softened brutus, and a harmonious debauch succeeded. Like the old Egyptians, they debated first sober and then drunk, and, to stagger my general notion that the ancients were unwise, candour compels me to own it was while stammering, maudlin, stinking, and in every sense drunk, that mephistopheles drivelled out a scheme so cunning and so new as threw everybody and everything into the shade. It was carried by hiccoughation.

To work this scheme mephistopheles required a beautiful large new tent; the serpentine man bought it. Money to feed the gang; serpent advanced it.

Robinson's tent was about thirty yards from his claim, which its one opening faced. So he and George worked with an eye ever upon their tent. At night two men of Robinson's party patrolled, armed to the teeth; they relieved guard every two hours. Captain Robinson's orders to these men, if they saw anybody doing anything suspicious after dark, were these, "First fire, then inquire." This general order was matter of publicity for a quarter of a mile round Robinson's tent, and added to his popularity and our rascals' perplexities.

These orders had surely the double merit of conciseness and melody; well, for all that they were disgustingly offensive to one true friend of the captain's, viz., to George Fielding.

"What is all the gold in the world compared with a man's life?" said he indignantly.

"An ounce of it is worth half a dozen such lives as some here," was the cool reply.

"I have heard you talk very different. I mind when you could make excuses even for thieves that were never taught any better, poor unfortunate souls."

"Did I?" said the captain, a little taken aback. "Well, perhaps I did; it was natural, hem! under the circumstances. No! not for such thieves as these, that haven't got any honour at all."

"Honour, eh?"

"Yes, honour. Look here: suppose in my unconverted days I had broke into a jeweller's shop (that comes nearest to a mine) with four or five pals, do you think I should have held it lawful to rob my pals of any part of the swag just because we happened to be robbing a silversmith? Certainly not. I assure you, George, the punishment of such a nasty, sneaking, dishonourable act would be death in every gang, and cheap too. Well, we have broken into Nature's shop here, and we are to rifle her, and not turn to, like unnatural monsters, and rob our ten thousand pals."

"Thieving is thieving in my view," was the prejudiced reply.

"And hanging is hanging, as all thieves shall find if caught convenient!"

"You make my flesh creep, Tom. I liked you better when you were not so great a man, more humble-like. Have you forgotten when you had to make excuses for

yourself? Then you had Susan on your side and brought me round, for I was bitter against theft, but never so bad as you are now."

"Oh, never mind what I said in those days. Why, you must be well aware I did not know what I was talking about. I had been a rogue and a fool, and I talked like both; but now I am a man of property, and my eyes are open and my conscience revolts against theft, and the gallows is the finest institution going, and next to that comes a jolly good prison. I wish there was one in this mine as big as Pentonville, then property——"

Here the dialogue was closed by the demand the pick made upon the man of property's breath. But it rankled, and on laying down the pick he burst out, "Well, to think of an honest man like you having a word to say for thieving! Why, it is a despicable trait in a gold-mine. I'll go further. I'll prove it is the sin of sins all round the world. Stolen money never thrives—goes for drink and nonsense. Now you pick and I'll wash. Theft corrupts the man that is robbed as well as the thief, drives him to despair and drink and ruin, temporal and eternal. No country could stand half an hour without law!! The very honest would turn thieves if not protected, and there would be a go. Besides, this great crime is like a trunk railway; other little crimes run into it and out of it; lies buzz about it like these Australian flies—drat you! Drunkenness precedes and follows it, and perjury rushes to its defence."

"Well, Tom, you are a beautiful speaker."

"I haven't done yet. What wonder it degrades a man when a dog loses his dignity under it. Behold the dog who has stolen; look at Carlo yesterday when he demeaned himself to prig Jem's dinner (the sly brute won't look at ours). How mean he cut with his tail under his belly, instead of turning out to meet folk all jolly and waggle-um-tail-um as on other occasions. Hollo! you, sir! what are you doing so near our tent?" and up jumped the man of property and ran cocking a revolver to a party who was kneeling close to the friends' tent.

The man looked up coolly; he was on his knees. "We are newly arrived and just going to pitch, and a digger told us we must not come within thirty yards of the captain's tent, so we are measuring the distance."

"Well, measure it, and keep it."

Robinson stayed by his tent till the man, whose face was strange to him, had measured and marked the ground. Soon after the tent in question was pitched, and it looked so large and new that the man of property's suspicions were lulled.

"It is all right," said he; "tent is worth twenty pounds at the lowest farthing."

While Black Will and his gang were scheming to get the friends' gold, Robinson, though conscious only of his general danger, grew more and more nervous as the bag grew heavier, and strengthened his defence every day.

This very day one was added to the cause of order in a very characteristic way. I must first observe that Mr. M'Laughlan had become George's bailiff, that is, on discovery of the gold he had agreed to incorporate George's flocks, to use his ground, and to account to him, sharing the profits and George running the risks. George had, however, encumbered the property with Abner as herdsman: that worthy had come whining to him lame of one leg from a blow on the head, which he convinced George Jacky had given him with his battle-axe.

"I'm spoiled for life, and by your savage. I have lost my place; do something for me."

Good-hearted George did as related, and moreover promised to give Jacky a hiding if ever he caught him again. George's aversion to bloodshed is matter of history; it was also his creed that a good hiding did nobody any harm.

Now it was sheep-shearing time, and M'Laughlan was short of hands; he came into the mine to see whether out of so many thousands he could not find four or five who would shear instead of digging.

When he put the question to George, George shook his head doubtfully. "However," said he, "look out for some unlucky ones; that is your best chance, leastways your only one."

So M'Laughlan went cannily about listening here and there to the men, who were now at their dinners, and he found Ede's gang grumbling and growling with their mouths full; in short, enjoying at the same time a good dinner and an Englishman's grace.

"This will do," thought the Scot, misled like Continental nations, by that little trait of ours; he opened the ball.

"I'm saying, my lads, will ye gie ower this *weary wark a wee whilie* and shear a wheen sheep to me?" The men

looked in his face, then at one another, and the proposal struck them as singularly droll. They burst out laughing in his face.

M'Laughlan (keeping his temper thoroughly, but not without a severe struggle), "Oh, fine I ken I'll hae to pay a maist deevelish price for your highnesses—aweel I'se pay—aw thing has its price; jaast name your wage for shearing five hunder sheep."

The men whispered together. The Scot congratulated himself on his success; it would be a question of price after all.

"We will do it for—the wool."

"Th' 'oo?—oo ay! but hoo muckle o' th' 'oo? for ye ken——"

"How muckle? why, all."

"A' the 'oo! ye blackguard, ye're no blate."

"Keep your temper, farmer; it is not worth our while to shear sheep for less than that."

"Deil go wi' ye, then!" and he moved off in great dudgeon.

"Stop," cried the captain, "you and I are acquainted. You lived out Wellington way; me and another wandered to your hut one day, and you gave us our supper."

"Ay, lad, I mind o' ye the noo!"

"The jolliest supper ever I had—a haggis you called it."

"Ay, did I, my fine lad. I cooked it till ye mysel'. Ye micht help me, for ane."

"I will," said Captain Ede, and a conference took place in a whisper between him and his men.

"It is a' reicht the noo!" thought M'Laughlan.

"We have an offer to make you," said Ede respectfully.

"Let us hear't."

"Our party is large; we want a cook for it, and we offer you the place in return for past kindness."

"Me a cuik, y' impudent vagabond!" cried the Caledonian, red as a turkey-cock, and if a look could have crushed a party of eight, their hole had been their grave.

M'Laughlan took seven ireful steps—wide ones—then his hot anger assumed a cold, sardonic form; he returned, and with blighting satire speered this question by way of gratifying an ironical curiosity, "An whaat would ye ha'e the cheek t' offer a M'Laughlan to cuik till ye, you that kens sae fine the price o' wark?"

"Thirty shillings."

"Thretty shilling the week for a M'Laughlan!"

"The week!" cried Ede, "nonsense—thirty shillings a day, of course. We sell work for gold, sir, and we give gold for it. Look here!" and he suddenly bared a sturdy brown arm, and smacking it cried, "that is dirt where you come from, but it is gold here."

"Ye're a fine lad," said the Scot smoothly, "and ye've a bonny aerm," added he, looking down at it, "I'se no deny that. I'm thinking—I'll just come—and cuik till ye a wee—for auld lang syne—thretty schelln the day—and ye'll buy the flesh o' me. I'll sell it a hantle cheaper than thir warldly-minded fleshers."

Bret, he came to be shorn and remained to fleece. He went and told George what he had done. "Hech! hech!" whined he, "thir's a maist awfu' come-doon for the M'Laughlans—but wha wadna' stuip to lift gowd?"

He left his head-man, a countryman of his own, in charge of the flocks, and tarried in the mine. He gave great satisfaction, except that he used to make his masters wait for dinner while he pronounced a thundering long benediction; but his cookery compensated the delay.

Robinson enrolled him in his police, and it was the fashion openly to quiz and secretly respect him. Robinson also made friends with the women, in particular with one Mary M'Dogherty, wife of a very unsuccessful digger. Many a pound of potatoes Pat and she had from the captain, and this getting wind, secured the goodwill of the Irish boys.

CHAPTER LXI.

George was very home-sick.

"Haven't we got a thousand pounds apiece yet?"

"Hush! no! not quite; but too much to bawl about."

"And we never shall till you take my advice and trace the gold to its home in the high rocks. Here we are plodding for dust, and one good nugget would make us."

"Well, well," said Robinson, "the moment the dry weather goes, you shall show me the home of the gold." Poor George and his nuggets!

"That is a bargain," said George; "and now I have something more to say. Why keep so much gold in our tent? It makes me fret. I am for selling some of it to Mr. Levi."

"What, at three pounds the ounce? Not if I know it."

"Then why not leave it with him to keep?"

"Because it is safer in its little hole in our tent. What do the diggers care for Mr. Levi? You and I respect him, but I am the man they swear by. No, George, Tom Weasel isn't caught napping twice in the same year. Don't you see I've been working this four months past to make my tent safe, and I've done it. It is watched for me night and day, and if our swag was in the Bank of England, it wouldn't be safer than it is. Put that in your pipe. Well, Carlo, what is the news in your part?"

Carlo came running up to George and licked his face, which just rose above the hole.

"What is it, Carlo?" asked George in some astonishment.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the other, "here is the very dog come out to encourage his faint-hearted master."

"No!" said George, "it can't be that—he means something—be quiet, Carlo, licking me all to pieces—but what it is, Heaven only knows. Don't you encourage him; he has no business out of the tent—go back, Carlo—go into kennel, sir," and off slunk Carlo back into the tent, of which he was the day-sentinel.

"Tom," remarked George thoughtfully, "I believe Carlo wanted to show me something; he is a wonderful wise dog."

"Nonsense!" cried Robinson sharply, "he heard you at the old lay grumbling, and came to say, 'Cheer up, old fellow.'"

While Robinson was thus quizzing George, a tremendous noise was suddenly heard in the tent. A scuffle—a fierce muffled snarl—and a human yell; with a cry almost as loud, the men bounded out of their hole, and, the blood running like melting ice down their backs with apprehension, burst into the tent; then they came upon a sight that almost drew the eyes out of their heads.

In the centre of the tent, not six inches from their buried treasure, was the head of a man emerging from the bowels of the earth, and cursing and yelling, for Carlo had seized his head by the nape of the neck and bitten it so deep, that the blood literally squirted, and was stamping and going back snarling and pulling and hauling in fierce jerks to extract it from the earth, while the burly-headed ruffian it belonged to, cramped by his situation and

pounced on unawares by the fiery teeth, was striving and battling to get down into the earth again. Spite of his disadvantage, such were his strength and despair that he now swung the dog backwards and forwards. But the men burst in. George seized him by the hair of his head, Tom by the shoulder, and with Carlo's help wrenched him on to the floor of the tent, where he was flung on his back with Tom's revolver at his temple, and Carlo flew round and round, barking furiously, and now and then coming flying at him; on which occasions he was always warded off by George's strong arm, and passed devious, his teeth clicking together like machinery, the snap and the rush being all one design that must succeed or fail together.

Captain Robinson put his lips to his whistle, and the tent was full of his friends in a moment.

"Get me a bullock-rope."

"Ay!"

"And drive a stout pole into the ground."

"Ay!"

In less than five minutes brutus was tied up to a post in the sun with a placard on his breast on which was written in enormous letters:—

THIEF

(and underneath in smaller letters)

Caught trying to shake Captain Robinson's tent.
First offence.

N.B.—To be hanged next time.

Then a crier was sent through the mine to invite inspection of brutus' features, and ere sunset thousands looked into his face, and when he tried to lower it, pulled it savagely up.

"I shall know you again, my lad," was the common remark, "and if I catch you too near my tent, rope or revolver, one of the two."

Captain Robinson's men did not waste five minutes with brutus. They tied him to the stake and dashed into their holes to make up lost time, but Robinson and George remained quiet in their tent.

"George," said Tom in a low, contrite, humble voice,

"let us return thanks to Heaven, for vain is man's skill." And they did.

"George," said Tom, rising from his knees, "the conceit is taken out of me for about the twentieth time; I felt so strong and I was nobody. The danger came in a way I never dreamed, and when it had come we were saved by a friend I never valued. Give a paw, Carlo." Carlo gave a paw.

"He has been a good friend to us this day," said George. "I see it all now; he must have heard the earth move and did not understand it, so he came for me, and when you would not let me go he went back, and says he, 'I dare to say it is a rabbit burrowing up.' So he waited still as death watching, and nailed six feet of vermin instead of bunny."

Here they both fell to caressing Carlo, who jumped and barked and finished with a pretended onslaught on the captain as he was kneeling looking at their so late imperilled gold, and knocked him over and slobbered his face when he was down. Opinions varied, but the impression was he knew he had been a clever dog. This same evening Jem made a collar for him on which was written "Policeman C."

The fine new tent was entered and found deserted, nothing there but an enormous mound of earth that came out of the subterranean, which Robinson got a light and inspected all the way to its debouchure in his own tent. As he returned holding up his light and peering about, he noticed something glitter at the top of the arch; he held the light close to it, and saw a speck or two of gold sparkling here and there. He took out his knife and scraped the roof in places, and brought to light in detached pieces a layer of gold-dust about the substance of a sheet of blotting-paper and full three yards wide; it crossed the subterranean at right angles, dipping apparently about an inch in two yards. The conduct of brutus and co. had been typical. They had been so bent on theft that they were blind to the pocketsful of honest, safe, easy gold they rubbed their very eyes and their thick skulls against on their subterraneous path to danger and crime.

Two courses occurred to Robinson; one was to try and monopolise this vein of gold, the other to take his share of it, and make the rest add to his popularity and influence in the mine. He chose the latter, for the bumptiousness was

chilled in him. This second attack on his tent made him tremble.

"I am a marked man," said he. "Well, if I have enemies, the more need to get friends all round me."

I must here observe that many men failed altogether at the gold-diggings, and returned in rags and tatters to the towns; many others found a little, enough to live like a gentleman anywhere else, but too little for a bare existence in a place where an egg cost a shilling, a cabbage a shilling, and baking two pounds of beef one shilling and sixpence, and a pair of mining boots eight pounds, and a frying-pan thirty shillings, and so on.

Besides the hundreds that fell by diarrhœa, their hands clutching in vain the gold that could not follow them, many a poor fellow died of a broken heart and hardships suffered in vain, and some, long unlucky but persevering, suddenly surprised by a rich find of gold, fell by the shock of good fortune, went raving mad, dazzled by the gold, and perished miserably. For here all was on a great heroic scale, starvation, wealth, industry, crime, retribution, madness, and disease.

Now the good-natured captain had his eye upon four unlucky men at this identical moment.

No. 1, Mr. Miles, his old master, who having run through his means, had come to the diggings. He had joined a gang of five; they made only about three pounds a week each, and had expelled him, alleging that his work was not quite up to their mark. He was left without a mate, and earned a precarious livelihood without complaining, for he was game, but Robinson's quick eye and ear saw his clothes were shabby, and that he had given up his ha! ha! ha!

No. 2, Jem, whose mate had run away and robbed him, and he was left solus with his tools.

No. 3, Mr. Stevens, an accomplished scholar, and above all, linguist, broad in the forehead but narrow in the chest, who had been successively rejected by five gangs, and was now at a discount. He picked up a few shillings by interpreting, but it was a suspicious circumstance that he often came two miles from his end of the camp to see Robinson just at dinner-time. Then a look used to pass between those two good-hearted creatures, and Mr. Stevens was served first and Carlo docked till evening. Titles prevailed but little in the mine. They generally addressed the males

of our species thus—"Hi! man!" The females thus—"Hi! woman!" The Spartans! but these two made an exception in favour of this reduced scholar. They called him "Sir," and felt abashed his black coat should be so rusty; and they gave him the gristly bits, for he was not working, but always served him first.

No. 4, Unlucky Jack, a digger. This man really seemed to be unlucky. Gangs would find the stuff on four sides of him, and he none; his last party had dissolved, owing they said to his ill-luck, and he was forlorn. These four Robinson convened, with the help of Mary M'Dogherty, who went for Stevens, and made them a little speech, telling them he had seen all their four ill-lucks, and was going to end that with one blow. He then, taking the direction of brutus' gold vein, marked them out a claim full forty yards off, and himself one close to them; organised them, and set them working in high spirits, tremulous expectation, and a fervour of gratitude to him, and kindly feeling towards their unlucky comrades.

"You won't find anything for six feet," said the captain. "Meantime, all of you turn to and tell the rest how you were the unluckiest man in the whole mine—till you fell in with me—he! he!"

And the captain chuckled. His elastic vanity was fast recovering from brutus, and his spirits rising.

Towards evening he collected his whole faction, got on the top of two cradles, made a speech, thanked them for their good-will, and told them he had now an opportunity of making them a return. He had discovered a vein of gold which he could have kept all to himself, but it was more just and more generous to share it with his partisans.

"Now, pass through this little mine one at a time," said he, "and look at the roof, where I have stuck the two lighted candles, and then pass on quick to make room for others."

The men dived one after another, examined the roof, and rushing wildly out at the other end in great excitement, ran and marked out claims on both sides of the subterranean.

But with all their greediness and eagerness, they left ten feet square untouched on each side the subterranean.

"What is this left for?"

"That is left for the clever fellow that found the gold after a thief had missed it," cried one.

"And for the generous fellow that parted his find," roared another from a distance.

Robinson seemed to reflect.

"No! I won't spoil the meat by cutting myself the fat—no! I am a digger, but not only a digger, I aspire to the honour of being a captain of diggers; my claim lies out there."

"Hurrah! three cheers for Captain Robinson!"

"Will you do me a favour in return?"

"Hurrah! won't we?"

"I am going to petition the governor to send us out police to guard our tents."

"Hurrah!"

"And even beaks, if necessary [doubtful murmurs]. And above all, soldiers to take our gold safe down to Sydney."

"Hurrah!"

"Where we can sell it at three fifteen the ounce."

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"Instead of giving it away here for three pounds, and then being robbed. If you will all sign, Mr. Stevens and I will draw up the petition; no country can stand without law!"

"Hurrah for Captain Robinson, the diggers' friend."

And the wild fellows jumped out of the holes, and four seized the diggers' friend, and they chaired him in their rough way, and they put Carlo into a cradle, and raised him high, and chaired him, and both man and dog were right glad to get safe out of the precarious honour.

The proceedings ended by brutus being loosed and set between two long lines of men with lumps of clay, and pelted and knocked down, and knocked up again, and driven—bruised, battered and bleeding—out of that part of the camp. He found his way to a little dirty tent not much bigger than a badger's hole, crawled in, and sunk down in a fainting state, and lay on his back stiff and fevered, and smarting soul and body many days.

And while Robinson was exulting in his skill, his good fortune, his popularity, his swelling bag, and the constabulary force he was collecting and heading, this tortured ruffian, driven to utter desperation by the exposure of his features to all the camp with "Thief" blazing on him, lay groaning stiff and sore, but lived for revenge.

"Let him keep his gold; I don't care for his gold now. I'll have his blood!"

CHAPTER LXII.

"I WONDER at you giving away the claim that lay close to the gold; it is all very well to be generous, but you forget Susan."

"Don't you be silly, George! the vein dips, and those that cut down on it where it is horizontallish will get a little; we, that nick it nearly verticallish, will get three times as much out of a ten-foot square claim."

"Well, you are a sharp fellow, to be sure; but if it is so, why on earth did you make a favour to them of giving them the milk and taking the cream?"

"Policy, George! policy!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

SUNDAY.

"TOM, I invite you to a walk."

"Ay! ay! I'd give twenty pounds for one; but the swag?"

"Leave it this one day with Mr. Levi; he has got two young men always armed in his tent, and a little peevish dog, and gutta-percha pipes running into all the Jews' tents that are at his back, like chicks after the old hen."

"Oh, he is a deep one."

"And he has got mouthpieces to them, and so he could bring thirty men upon a thief in less than half a minute."

"Well, then, George, a walk is a great temptation this beautiful day."

In short, by eight o'clock the gold was deposited, and the three friends, for Policeman C. must count for one, stepped lustily out in the morning air.

It was the month of January: a blazing-hot day was beginning to glow through the freshness of morning; the sky was one cope of pure blue, and the southern air crept slowly up, its wings clogged with fragrance, and just tuned the trembling leaves—no more.

"Is not this pleasant, Tom?—isn't it sweet?"

"I believe you, George! and what a shame to run down

such a country as this. There, they come home, and tell you the flowers have no smell, but they keep dark about the trees and bushes being haystacks of flowers. Snuff the air as we go, it is a thousand English gardens in one. Look at all those tea-scrubs, each with a thousand blossoms on it as sweet as honey, and the golden wattles on the other side, and all smelling like seven o'clock; after which, flowers be hanged!"

"Ay, lad! it is very refreshing—and it is Sunday, and we have got away from the wicked for an hour or two; but in England there would be a little white church out yonder, and a spire like an angel's forefinger pointing from the grass to heaven, and the lads in their clean smock-frocks like snow, and the wenches in their white stockings and new shawls, and the old women in their scarlet cloaks and black bonnets, all going one road, and a tinkle-tinkle from the belfry, that would turn all these other sounds and colours and sweet smells holy as well as fair on the Sabbath morn. Ah! England! Ah!"

"You will see her again—no need to sigh."

"Oh, I was not thinking of her in particular just then."

"Of who?"

"Of Susan!"

"Prejudice be hanged! this is a lovely land."

"So 'tis, Tom, so 'tis. But I'll tell you what puts me out a little bit; nothing is what it sets up for here. If you see a ripe pear and go to eat it—it is a lump of hard wood. Next comes a thing the very sight of which turns your stomach—and that is delicious, a loquot, for instance. There, now, look at that magpie! Well, it is Australia—so that magpie is a crow, and not a magpie at all. Everything pretends to be some old friend or other of mine, and turns out a stranger. Here is nothing but surprises and deceptions. The flowers make a point of not smelling, and the bushes that nobody expects to smell or wants to smell, they smell lovely."

"What does it matter where the smell comes from, so that you get it?"

"Why, Tom," replied George, opening his eyes, "it makes all the difference. I like to smell a flower—flower is not complete without smell—but I don't care if I never smell a bush till I die. Then the birds, they laugh and talk like Christians; they make me split my sides, God bless their little hearts; but they won't chirrup. Oh dear,

no; bless you, they leave the Christians to chirrup—they hold conversations and giggle, and laugh and play a thing like a fiddle. It is Australia! where everything is inside-out and topsy-turvy. The animals have four legs, so they jump on two. Ten foot square of rock lets for a pound a month; ten acres of grass for a shilling a year. Roasted at Christmas, shiver o' cold on Midsummer-day. The lakes are grass, and the rivers turn their backs on the sea and run into the heart of the land; and the men would stand on their heads, but I have taken a thought, and I've found out why they don't."

"Why?"

"Because, if they did, their heads would point the same way a man's head points in England."

Robinson laughed, and told George he admired the country for these very traits. "Novelty for me against the world. Who'd come twelve thousand miles to see nothing we couldn't see at home? Hang the same old story always. Where are we going, George?"

"Oh, not much farther; only about twelve miles from the camp."

"Where to?"

"To a farmer I know. I am going to show you a lark, Tom," said George, and his eyes beamed benevolence on his comrade.

Robinson stopped dead short. "George," said he, "no! don't let us. I would rather stay at home and read my book. You can go into temptation and come out pure; I can't. I am one of those that, if I go into a puddle up to my shoe, I must splash up to my middle."

"What has that to do with it?"

"You're proposing to me to go in for a lark on the Sabbath-day?"

"Why, Tom, am I the man to tempt you to do evil?" asked George, hurt.

"Why, no! but for all that you proposed a lark."

"Ay, but an innocent one, one more likely to lift your heart on high than to give you ill thoughts."

"Well, this a riddle," and Robinson was intensely puzzled.

"Carlo," cried George suddenly, "come here; I will not have you hunting and tormenting those kangaroo-rats to-day. Let us all be at peace, IF YOU PLEASE. Come to heel."

The friends strode briskly on, and a little after eleven o'clock they came upon a small squatter's house and premises. "Here we are," cried George, and his eyes glittered with innocent delight.

The house was thatched and whitewashed, and English was written on it and on every foot of ground round it. A furze bush had been planted by the door. Vertical oak palings were the fence, with a five-barred gate in the middle of them. From the little plantation all the magnificent trees and shrubs of Australia had been excluded with amazing resolution and consistency, and oak and ash reigned safe from over-towering rivals. They passed to the back of the house, and there George's countenance fell a little, for on the oval grass-plot and gravel-walk he found from thirty to forty rough fellows, most of them diggers.

"Ah! well," said he, on reflection, "we could not expect to have it all to ourselves, and indeed it would be a sin to wish it, you know. Now, Tom, come this way; here it is—here it is—there." Tom looked up, and in a gigantic cage was a light brown bird.

He was utterly confounded. "What, is it this we came twelve miles to see?"

"Ay! and twice twelve wouldn't have been much to me."

"Well, but what is the lark you talked of?"

"This is it."

"This? This is a bird."

"Well, and isn't a lark a bird?"

"Oh ay! I see! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Robinson's merriment was interrupted by a harsh remonstrance from several of the diggers, who were all from the other end of the camp.

"Hold your —— cackle," cried one; "he is going to sing;" and the whole party had their eyes turned with expectation towards the bird.

Like most singers, he kept them waiting a bit. But at last, just at noon, when the mistress of the house had warranted him to sing, the little feathered exile began as it were to tune his pipes. The savage men gathered round the cage that moment, and amidst a dead stillness the bird uttered some very uncertain chirps, but after a while he seemed to revive his memories, and call his ancient cadences back to him one by one, and string them *sotto voce*.

And then the same sun that had warmed his little heart

at home came glowing down on him here, and he gave music back for it more and more, till at last, amidst breathless silence and glistening eyes of the rough diggers hanging on his voice, out burst in that distant land his English song.

It swelled his little throat and gushed from him with thrilling force and plenty, and every time he checked his song to think of its theme, the green meadows, the quiet stealing streams, the clover he first soared from and the spring he sang so well, a loud sigh from many a rough bosom, many a wild and wicked heart, told how tight the listeners had held their breath to hear him; and when he swelled with song again, and poured with all his soul the green meadows, the quiet brooks, the honey clover, and the English spring, the rugged mouths opened and so stayed, and the shaggy lips trembled, and more than one drop trickled from fierce, unbridled hearts down bronzed and rugged cheeks. *Dulce domum!*

And these shaggy men, full of oaths and strife and cupidity, had once been white-headed boys, and had strolled about the English fields with little sisters and little brothers, and seen the lark rise, and heard him sing this very song. The little playmates lay in the churchyard, and they were full of oaths and drink and lusts and remorses, but no note was changed in this immortal song. And so for a moment or two years of vice rolled away like a dark cloud from the memory, and the past shone out in the song-shine; they came back, bright as the immortal notes that lighted them, those faded pictures and those fleeted days; the cottage, the old mother's tears, when he left her without one grain of sorrow; the village church and its simple chimes; the clover field hard by in which he lay and gambolled, while the lark praised God overhead; the chubby playmates that never grew to be wicked, the sweet hours of youth, and innocence, and home!

CHAPTER LXIV.

"What will you take for him, mistress? I will give you five pounds for him."

"No! no! I won't take five pounds for my bird."

"Of course she won't," cried another; "she wouldn't be such a flat. Here, missus," cried he, "I'll give you

that for him," and he extended a brown hand with at least thirty new sovereigns glittering in it.

The woman trembled; she and her husband were just emerging from poverty after a hard fight. "Oh," she cried, "it is a shame to tempt a poor woman with so much gold. We had six brought over and all died on the way but this one!" and she threw her white apron over her head not to see the glittering bribe.

"—— you! put the blunt up and don't tempt the woman," was the cry. Another added, "Why, you fool, it wouldn't live a week if you had it," and they all abused the merchant; but the woman turned to him kindly and said, "You come to me every Sunday, and he shall sing to you. You will get more pleasure from him so," said she sweetly, "than if he was always by you."

"So I will, old girl," replied the rough in a friendly tone.

George stayed till the lark gave up singing altogether, and then he said, "Now I am off. I don't want to hear bad language after that: let us take the lark's chirp home to bed with us;" and they made off; and true it was the pure strains dwelt upon their spirits, and refreshed and purified these sojourners in a godless place. Meeting these two figures on Sunday afternoon, armed each with a doubled-barrelled gun and a revolver, you would never have guessed what gentle thoughts possessed them wholly. They talked less than they did coming, but they felt so quiet and happy.

"The pretty bird," purred George (seeing him by the ear), "I feel after him—there—as if I had just come out o' church."

"So do I, George and I think his song must be a psalm, if we knew all."

"That it is, for Heaven taught it him. We must try and keep all this in our hearts when we get among the broken bottles and foul language and gold," says George. "How sweet it all smells! sweeter than before."

"That is because it is afternoon."

"Yes! or along of the music; that tune was a breath from home that makes everything please me: now this is the first Sunday that has looked and smelled and sounded Sunday."

"George, it is hard to believe the world is wicked; everything seems good and gentle, and at peace with heaven and earth."

A jet of smoke issued from the bush, followed by the report of a gun, and Carlo, who had taken advantage of George's reverie to slip on ahead, gave a sharp howl, and spun round upon all-fours.

"The scoundrels!" shrieked Robinson. And in a moment his gun was at his shoulder, and he fired both barrels slap into the spot whence the smoke had issued.

Both the men dashed up and sprang into the bush, revolver in hand, but ere they could reach it the dastard had run for it, and the scrub was so thick, pursuit was hopeless. The men returned full of anxiety for Carlo. The dog met them, his tail between his legs, but at sight of George he wagged his tail, and came to him and licked George's hand, and walked on with them, licking George's hand every now and then.

"Look, Tom, he is as sensible as a Christian. He knows the shot was meant for him, though they didn't hit him."

By this time the men had got out of the wood and pursued their road, but not with tranquil hearts. Sunday ended with the noise of that coward's gun. They walked on hastily, guns ready, fingers on trigger—at war. Suddenly Robinson looked back and stopped, and drew George's attention to Carlo. He was standing with all his four legs wide apart like a statue. George called him; he came directly, and was for licking George's hand, but George pulled him about and examined him all over.

"I wish they may not have hurt him after all, the butchers; they have too. See here, Tom, here is one streak of blood on his belly; nothing to hurt, though, I do hope. Never mind, Carlo," cried George, "it is only a single shot, by what I can see; 'tisn't like when Will put the whole charge into you rabbit-shooting, is it, Carlo? No, says he; we don't care for this, do we, Carlo?" cried George rather boisterously.

"Make him go into that pool there," said Robinson, "then he won't have fever."

"I will; here—cess! cess!" He threw a stone into the pool of water that lay a little off the road, and Carlo went in after it without hesitation, though not with his usual alacrity; after an unsuccessful attempt to recover the stone, he swam out lower down and came back to the men and wagged his tail slowly, and walked behind George. They went on.

"Tom," said George after a pause, "I don't like it."

"Don't like what?"

"He never so much as shook himself."

"What of that? He did shake himself, I should say."

"Not as should be. Who ever saw a dog come out of the water and not shake himself? Carlo, hie Carlo!" and George threw a stone along the ground, after which Carlo trotted; but his limbs seemed to work stiffly; the stone spun round a sharp corner in the road, the dog followed it.

"He will do now," said Robinson.

They walked briskly on. On turning the corner, they found Carlo sitting up and shivering, with the stone between his paws.

"We must not let him sit," said Tom; "keep his blood warm. I don't think we ought to have sent him into the water."

"I don't know," muttered George gloomily. "Carlo," cried he cheerfully, "don't you be down-hearted; there is nothing so bad as faint-heartedness for man or beast. Come, up and away ye go, and shake it off like a man."

Carlo got up and wagged his tail in answer, but he evidently was in no mood for running; he followed languidly behind.

"Let us get home," said Robinson; "there is an old pal of mine that is clever about dogs; he will cut the shot out if there is one in him, and give him some physic."

The men strode on, and each, to hide his own uneasiness, chatted about other matters, but all of a sudden Robinson cried out, "Why, where *is* the dog?" They looked back, and there was Carlo some sixty yards in the rear, but he was not sitting this time, he was lying on his belly.

"Oh, this is a bad job!" cried George. The men ran up in real alarm. Carlo wagged his tail as soon as they came near him, but he did not get up.

"Carlo," cried George despairingly, "you wouldn't do it, you couldn't think to do it. Oh, my dear Carlo, it is only making up your mind to live. Keep up your heart, old fellow; don't go to leave us alone among these villains. My poor dear, darling dog! Oh no! he won't live, he can't live; see how dull his poor dear eye is getting. Oh! Carlo! Carlo!"

At the sound of his master's voice in such distress Carlo whimpered, and then he began to stretch his limbs

out. At the sight of this Robinson cried hastily, "Rub him, George; we did wrong to send him into the water."

George rubbed him all over. After rubbing him awhile he said, "Tom, I seem to feel him turning to dead under my hand."

George's hand in rubbing Carlo came round to the dog's shoulder, then Carlo turned his head, and for the third time began to lick George's hand. George let him lick his hand and gave up rubbing him, for where was the use? Carlo never left off licking his hand, but feebly, very feebly, more and more feebly.

Presently, even while he was licking his hand, the poor thing's teeth closed slowly on his loving tongue, and then he could lick the beloved hand no more. Breath fluttered about his body a little while longer; but in truth he had ceased to live when he could no longer kiss his master's hand. And so the poor single-hearted soul was gone. George took it up tenderly in his arms. Robinson made an effort to console him.

"Don't speak to me, if you please," said George gently but quickly. He carried it home silently, and laid it silently down in a corner of the tent.

Robinson made a fire and put some steaks on, and made George slice some potatoes to keep him from looking always at what so little while since was Carlo. Then they sat down silently and gloomily to dinner, it was long past their usual hour, and they were working men. Until we die we dine, come what may. The first part of the meal passed in deep silence. Then Robinson said sadly, "We will go home, George. I fall into your wishes now. Gold can't pay for what we go through in this hellish place."

"Not it," replied George quietly.

"We are surrounded by enemies."

"Seems so," was the reply in a very languid tone.

"Labour by day and danger by night."

"Ay!" but in a most indifferent tone.

"And no Sabbath for us two."

"No!"

"I'll do my best for you, and when we have five hundred pounds more, you shall go home to Susan."

"Thank you! He was a good friend to us that lies there under my coat; he used to lie over it, and then who dare touch it?"

"No! but don't give way to that, George. Do eat a bit; it will do you good."

"I will, Tom, I will. Thank you kindly. Ah! now I see why he came to me and kept licking my hand so the moment he got the hurt. He had more sense than we had; he knew he and I were to part that hour; and I tormented his last minutes sending him into the water and after stones, when the poor thing wanted to be bidding me good-bye all the while. Oh dear! oh dear!" and George pushed his scarce-tasted dinner from him, and left the tent hurriedly, his eyes thick with tears.

Thus ended this human day so happily begun; and thus the poor dog paid the price of fidelity this Sunday afternoon.

Siste viator iter, and part with poor Carlo, for whom there are now no more little passing troubles, no more little simple joys. His duty is performed, his race is run: peace be to him, and to all simple and devoted hearts. Ah me! how rare they are among men!

"What are you doing, Tom, if you please?"

"Laying down a gut-line to trip them up when they get into our tent."

"When?—who?"

"Those that shot Carlo."

"They won't venture near me."

"Won't they? What was the dog shot for? They will come—and come to their death; to-night, I hope. Let them come! you will hear me cry 'Carlo' in their ears as I put my revolver to their skulls and pull the trigger."

George said nothing, but he clenched his teeth. After a pause he muttered, "We should pray against such thoughts."

Robinson was disappointed; no attack was made; in fact, even if such a thing was meditated, the captain's friends watched his tent night and day, and made such a feat a foolhardy enterprise, full of danger from without and within.

In the course of the next week a good deal of rain fell and filled many of the claims, and caused much inaction and distress among the diggers, and Robinson guarded the tent, and wrote letters and studied Australian politics, with a view to being shortly a member of

congress in these parts. George had his wish at last, and cruised about looking for the home of the gold. George recollected to have seen what he described as a river of quartz sixty feet broad, and running between two black rocks. It ran in his head that gold in masses was there locked up, for, argued he, all the nuggets of any size I have seen were more than half quartz. Robinson had given up debating the point. George was uneasy and out of spirits at not hearing from Susan for several months, and Robinson was for indulging him in everything.

Poor George! he could not even find his river of quartz. And when he used to come home day after day empty-handed and with this confession, the other's lips used to twitch with the hard struggle not to laugh at him; and he used to see the struggle, and be secretly more annoyed than if he had been laughed out at.

One afternoon, Tom Robinson, internally despising the whole thing, and perfectly sure in his own mind that there was no river of quartz, but paternal and indulgent to his friend's one weakness, said to him, "I'll tell you how to find this river of quartz, if it is anywhere except in your own head."

"I shall be much obliged to you. How?"

"Jem has come back to camp, and he tells me that Jacky is encamped with a lot more close to the gully he is working—it was on the other side the bush there—and Jacky inquired very kind after you."

"The little viper!"

"He grinned from ear to ear, Jem tells me; and says he, 'Me come and see George a good deal soon,' says he."

"If he does, George will tan his black hide for him."

"What makes you hold spite so long against poor Jacky?"

"He is a little sneaking varmint."

"He knows every part of this country, and he would show you 'the home of the gold,'" observed Robinson, restraining his merriment with great difficulty.

This cock would not fight, as vulgar wretches say. Jacky had rather mortified George by deserting him upon the first discovery of gold. "Dis a good deal stupid," was that worthy's remark on the second day. "When I hunt, tings run, and I run behind and catch dem. You hunt—it not run—yet you not catch it always. Dat a good deal stupid. Before we hunt gold you do many

tings, now do one: dat a good deal stupid. Before, you go so [erecting a forefinger]; now you always so [crooking it]. Dat too stupid." And with this—whirr! my lord was off to the woods.

On the head of this came Abner limping in, and told how a savage had been seen creeping after him with a battle-axe, and how he had lain insensible for days, and now was lame for life. George managed to forgive Jacky's unkind desertion, but for creeping after Abner and "spoiling him for life," to use Abner's phrase, he vowed vengeance on that black hide and heart.

Now if the truth must be told, Jacky had come back to the camp with Jem, and would have marched before this into George's tent. But Robinson knowing how angry George was with him, and not wishing either Jacky to be licked or George to be tomahawked, insisted on his staying with Jem till he had smoothed down his friend's indignation. Soon after this dialogue Robinson slipped out, and told Jacky to stay with Jem and keep out of George's way for a day or two. And now the sun began to set red as blood, and the place to sparkle far and wide with the fiery rays emitted from a hundred thousand bottles that lay sown broadcast over the land; and the thunder of the cradles ceased, and the accordions came out all over five miles of gold-mine. Their gentler strains lasted till the sun left the sky; then just at dusk came a tremendous discharge of musketry, roaring, rattling, and re-echoing among the rocks. This was tens of thousands of diggers discharging their muskets and revolvers previous to reloading them for the night; for calm as the sun had set to the music of accordions, many a deadly weapon they knew would be wanted to defend life and gold ere that same tranquil sun should rise again.

Thus the tired army slept; not at their ease like other armies guarded by sentinels and pickets, but every man in danger every night and every hour of it. Each man lay in his clothes with a weapon of death in his hand: Robinson with two, a revolver and a cutlass ground like a razor. Outside it was all calm and peaceful. No boisterous revelry—all seemed to sleep innocent and calm in the moonlight after the day of herculean toil.

Perhaps if any one eye could have visited the whole enormous camp, the children of theft and of the night might have been seen prowling and crawling from one bit

of shade to another. But in the part where our friends lay, the moon revealed no human figures but Robinson's patrol, three men who with a dark-lantern and armed to the teeth went their rounds and guarded forty tents—above all, the captain's. It was at his tent that guard was relieved every two hours. So all was watched the livelong night. Two pointed rocks connected at the base faced the captain's tent. The silver rays struck upon their foreheads wet with the vapours of night, and made them like frost seen through phosphorus. It was startling. The soul of silver seemed to be sentinel and eye the secret gold below. And now a sad, a miserable sound grated on the ear of night. A lugubrious quail doled forth a grating dismal note at long but measured intervals, offending the ear and oppressing the heart. This was the only sound Nature afforded for hours. The neighbouring bush, though crammed with the merriest souls that ever made feathers vibrate and dance with song, was like a tomb of black marble; not a sound—only this little raven of a quail tolled her harsh, lugubrious crake. Those whose musical creed is Time before Sentiment might have put up with this night-bird; for to do her justice she was a perfect timeist—one crake in a bar the livelong night; but her tune—ugh! She was the mother of all files that play on iron throughout the globe — Crake! — crake! — crake! untuning the night.

An eye of red light suddenly opened in the silver stream shows three men standing by a snowy tent. It is the patrol waiting to be relieved. Three more figures emerge from the distant shade and join them. The first three melt into the shade.—Crake!

The other three remain and mutter. Now they start on their rounds.

"What is that?" mutters one.

"I'll go and see."—Click.

"Well!"

"Oh, it is only that brown donkey that cruises about here. She will break her neck in one of the pits some day."

"Not she; she is not such an ass."

These three melted into the night, going their rounds; and now nothing is left in sight but a thousand cones of snow, and the donkey paddling carefully among the pits. —Craake!

Now the donkey stands a moment still in the moonlight —now he paddles slowly away and disappears on the dark side of the captain's tent. What is he doing? He stoops —he lies down—he takes off his head and skin, and lays them down. It is a man! He draws his knife and puts it between his teeth. A pistol is in his hand—he crawls on his stomach—the tent is between him and the patrol. His hand is inside the tent—he finds the opening and winds like a serpent into the tent.—Craake!

CHAPTER LXV.

Black Will no sooner found himself inside the tent than he took out a dark-lantern and opened the slide cautiously. There lay in one corner the two men fast asleep side by side. Casting the glare around, he saw at his feet a dog with a chain round him. It startled him for a moment, but only for a moment. He knew that dog was dead. mephistopheles had told him within an hour after the feat was performed. Close to his very hand was a pair of miner's boots. He detached them from the canvas and passed them out of the tent; and now looking closely at the ground, he observed a place where the soil seemed loose. His eye flashed with triumph at this. He turned up the openings of the tent behind him to make his retreat clear if necessary. He made at once for the loose soil, and the moment he moved forward Robinson's gut-lines twisted his feet from under him. He fell headlong in the middle, and half a dozen little bells rang furiously at the sleepers' heads.

Up jumped Tom and George weapons in hand, but not before Black Will had wrenched himself clear and bounded back to the door. At the door, in his rage at being balked, he turned like lightning and levelled his pistol at Robinson, who was coming at him cutlass in hand. The ex-thief dropped on his knees and made a furious upward cut at his arm. At one and the same moment the pistol exploded and the cutlass struck it and knocked it against the other side of the tent: the bullet passed over Robinson's head. Black Will gave a yell so frightful that for a moment it paralysed the men, and even with this yell he burst backward through the opening, and with a violent wrench of

his left hand brought the whole tent down and fled, leaving George and Robinson struggling in the canvas like cats in an empty flour-sack.

The baffled burglar had fled but a few yards when, casting his eye back, he saw their helplessness. Losing danger in hatred, he came back, not now to rob but murder, his left hand lifted high and gleaming like his cruel eye; as he prepared to plunge his knife through the canvas, flash bang! flash bang! bang! came three pistol-shots in his face from the patrol, who were running right slap at him not thirty yards off, and now it was life or death. He turned and ran for his life, the patrol blazing and banging at him. Eighteen shots they fired at him, one after another; more than one cut his clothes, and one went clean through his hat, but he was too fleet, he distanced them; but at the reports diggers peeped out of distant tents, and at sight of him running, flash bang went a pistol at him from every tent he passed, and George and Robinson, who had struggled out into the night, saw the red flashes issue, and then heard the loud reports bellow and re-echo as he dodged about down the line, and then all was still and calm as death under the cold, pure stars.—Craake!

They put up their tent again. The patrol came panting back. "He has got off, but he carried some of our lead in him. Go to bed, captain; we won't leave your tent all night."

Robinson and George lay down again thus guarded. The patrol sat by the tent: two slept, one loaded the arms again and watched. In a few minutes the friends were actually fast asleep again, lying silent as the vast camp lay beneath the silver stars.—Craake!

And now it was cold, much colder than before, darker too; no moon now, only the silver stars; it makes one shiver. Nature seemed to lie stark and stiff and dead, and that accursed craake her dirge. All tended to shivering and gloom. Yet a great event approached.—Craake!

A single event, a thousand times weightier to the world each time it comes than if with one fell stroke all the kingdoms of the globe became republics, and all the republics empires, so to remain a thousand years. An event a hundred times more beautiful than any other thing the eye can hope to see while in the flesh, yet it regaled the other senses too and blessed the universal heart.

Before this prodigious event came its little heralds sweeping across the face of night. First came a little motion of cold air—it was dead still before; then an undefinable freshness; then a very slight but rather grateful smell from the soil of the conscious earth. Next twittered from the bush one little hesitating chip.

Craake! went the lugubrious quail, pooh-poohing the suggestion. Then somehow rocks and forest and tents seemed less indistinct in shape; outlines peeped where masses had been.

Jug! jug! went a bird with a sweet gurgle in his deep throat. Craake! went the ill-omened one directly, disputing the last inch of Nature. But a gray thrush took up the brighter view; otock otock tock! o tuee o o! o tuee o o! o chio chee! o chio chee! sang the thrush with a decision as well as a melody that seemed to say, "Ah! but I am sure of it; I am sure, I am sure, wake up, joy! joy!"

From that moment there was no more craake: the lugubrious quail shut up in despair, perhaps in disdain,* and out gurgled another jug! jug! jug! as sweet a chuckle as Nature's sweet voice ever uttered in any land; and with that a mist like a white sheet came to light, but only for a moment, for it dared not stay to be inspected. "I know who is coming, I'm off," and away it crept off close to the ground—and little drops of dew peeped sparkling in the frost-powdered grass.

"Yock! yock! o chio faliera po! Otock otock tock! o chio chee! o chio chee!"

"Jug! jug! jug! jug!"

"Off we go! off we go!"

And now a thin red streak came into the sky, and perfume burst from the bushes, and the woods rang, not only with songs, some shrill, some as sweet as honey, but with a grotesque yet beautiful electric merriment of birds that can only be heard in this land of wonders. The pen can give but a shadow of the drollery and devilry of the sweet, merry rogues that hailed the smiling morn. Ten thousand of them, each with half a dozen songs, besides chattering and talking and imitating the fiddle, the fife, and the trombone. Niel gow! niel gow! niel gow! whined a leatherhead. Take care o' my hat! cries a thrush in a soft, melancholy voice; then with frightful

* Like anonymous detraction before *vox populi*.

harshness and severity, Where is your bacca-box! your box! your box! then before anyone could answer, in a tone that said devil-may-care where the box is or anything else, gyroc de doc! gyroc de doc! roc de doc! cheboc cheboc! Then came a tremendous cackle, ending with an obstreperous hoo! hoo! ha! from the laughing-jackass, who had caught sight of the red streak in the sky, harbinger, like himself, of morn; and the piping crows or whistling magpies, modulating and humming and chanting, not like birds, but like practised musicians with rich baritone voices, and the next moment creaking just for all the world like Punch or barking like a pug-dog. And the delicious thrush with its sweet and mellow tune. Nothing in an English wood so honey-sweet as his otock otock tock! o tuee o o! o tuee o o! o chio chee! o chio chee!

But the leatherheads beat all. Niel gow! niel gow! niel gow! off we go! off we go! off we go! followed by rapid conversations, the words unintelligible but perfectly articulate, and interspersed with the oddest chuckles, plans of pleasure for the day no doubt. Then ri tiddle tiddle tiddle tiddle tiddle tiddle tiddle! playing a thing like a fiddle with wires; then "off we go" again, and bow! wow! wow! jug! jug! jug! jug! jug! and the whole lot in exuberant spirits, such extravagances of drollery, such rollicking jollity, evidently splitting their sides with fun, and not able to contain themselves for it.

Oh! it was twelve thousand miles above the monotonous and scanty strains of a European wood; and when the roving and laughing, and harshly demanding bacca-boxes, and then as good as telling you they didn't care a feather for bacca-boxes or anything else, gyroc de doc! cheboc cheboc cheboc! and loudly announcing their immediate departure, and perching in the same place all the more; and sweet, low modulations ending in putting on the steam and creaking like Punch, and then almost tumbling off the branches with laughing at the general accumulation of nonsense—when all this drollery and devilry, and joy and absurdity were at their maddest and a thousand feathered fountains bubbling song were at their highest, then came the cause of all the merry hubbub—the pinnacles of rock glowed burnished gold—Nature, that had crept from gloom to pallor, burst from pallor to light and life and burning

colour—the great sun's forehead came with one gallant stride into the sky—and it was day!

Out shone ten thousand tents of every size, and hue, and shape, from Isaac Levi's rood of white canvas down to sugar-loaves, and even to miserable roofs built on the bare ground with slips of bark, under which unlucky diggers crept at night like badgers—roofed beds—no more—the stars twinkling through chinks in the tester. The myriad tents were clustered for full five miles on each side of the river, and it wound and sparkled in and out at various distances, and shone like a mirror in the distant background.

At the first ray the tents disgorged their inmates, and the human hive began to hum; then came the fight, the manœuvring, the desperate wrestle with Nature, and the keen fencing with their fellows, in short, the battle—to which, that nothing might be wanting, out burst the tremendous artillery of ten thousand cradles louder than thunder, and roaring and crashing without a pause.

The base of the two-peaked rock that looked so silvery in the moon is now seen to be covered with manuscript advertisements posted on it; we can only read two or three as we run to our work:—

"*IMMENSE* REDUCTION IN EGGS! ONLY ONE SHILLING EACH!!! BEVAN'S STORE."

"GO-AHEAD LIBRARY AND REGISTRATION OFFICE FOR NEW CHUMS. TOM LONG IN THE DEAD-HORSE GULLY."

"IF THIS MEETS THE I OF TOM BOWLES HE WILL EAR OF IS PAL IN THE IRON-BARK GULLY."

"THIS IS TO GIVE NOTICE THAT WHEREAS MY WIFE ELIZABETH SUTTON HAS TAKEN TO DRINK AND GONE OFF WITH MY MATE BOB, I WILL NOT BE ANSWERABLE FOR YOUR DEBTS NOR HOLD ANY COMMUNICATION WITH YOU IN FUTURE. JAMES SUTTON."

A young Jew, Nathan, issued from Levi's tent with a rough table and two or three pairs of scales, and other paraphernalia of a gold assayer and merchant. This was not the first mine by many the old Jew had traded in.

His first customers this morning were George and Robinson.

"Our tent was attacked last night, Mr. Levi."

"Again! humph!"

"Tom thinks he has got enemies in the camp."

"Humph! the young man puts himself too forward not to have enemies."

"Well," said George quickly, "if he makes bitter enemies, he makes warm friends."

George then explained that his nerve and Robinson's were giving way under the repeated attacks.

"We have had a talk, and we will sell the best part of our dust to you, sir. Give him the best price you can afford, for Susan's sake."

And away went George to look for his quartz river, leaving the ex-thief to make the bargain and receive the money.

In the transaction that followed, Mr. Levi did not appear to great advantage. He made a little advance on the three pounds per ounce on account of the quantity, but he would not give a penny above three guineas. No! business was business; he could and would have *given* George a couple of hundred pounds in day of need, but in buying and selling, the habits of a life could not be shaken off. Wherefore, Robinson kept back eight pounds of gold-dust and sold him the rest for notes of the Sydney Bank.

"Well, sir," said Tom cheerfully, "now my heart is light; what we have got we can carry round our waists now by night or day. Well, friend, what do you want poking your nose into the tent?" Coming out suddenly, he had run against a man who was in a suspicious attitude at the entrance.

"No offence," muttered the man, "I wanted to sell a little gold-dust."

Levi heard what Robinson said, and came quickly out.

He seated himself behind the scales.

"Where is your gold?" The man fumbled and brought out about an ounce. All the time he weighed it, the Jew's keen eye kept glancing into his face; he lowered his eyes and could not conceal a certain uneasiness. When he was gone Levi asked Robinson whether he knew that face.

"No," said Robinson, "I don't."

Levi called Nathan out.

"Nathan, look at that man, follow him cautiously, and tell me where we have seen him; above all, know him again. Surely that is the face of an enemy."

Then the old man asked himself where he had seen such

an eye and brow and shambling walk as that; and he fell into a brown study and groped among many years for the clue.

"What! is Erin-go-bragh up with the sun for once?" cried Robinson to Mary M'Dogherty, who passed him spade on shoulder.

"Sure if she warn't she'd never keep up with Newgut," was the instant rejoinder.

"Hem! how is your husband, Mary?"

"Och, captain, it is a true friend ye are for inquiring. Then it's tied in a knot he is."

"Mercy on us, tied in a knot!"

"Tied in a knot intirely wid the rheumatism—and it's tin days I'm working for him and the childhre, and my heart's broke against gravel and stone intirely. I wish it was pratees we are digging; I'd maybe dig up a dinner, anyway."

"There is no difficulty; the secret is to look in the right place."

"Ay! ay! take your divairsion, ye sly rogue! I wish ye had my five childhre."

"Oh, you spiteful cat!"

"Well, Ede, come to sell?"

"A little."

"What is to do out there? seems a bit of a crowd."

"What, haven't you heard? It is your friend Jem! he has got a slice of luck; bought a hole of a stranger, saw the stuff glitter, so offered him thirty pounds; he was green and snapped at it; and if Jem didn't wash four ounces out the first cradleful, I'm a Dutchman."

"Well, I'm right glad of that."

A young digger now approached respectfully. "Police report, captain."

"Hand it here. May I sit at your table a minute, Mr. Levi?" Mr. Levi bowed assent.

"No clue to the parties that attacked our tent last night?"

"None at present, captain, but we are all on the lookout. Some of us will be sure to hear of something, course of the day, and then I'll come and tell you. Will you read the report? There is the week's summary as well."

"Of course I will. Mum! mum! 'Less violence on the whole this week; more petty larceny.' That is bad. I'll put it down, Mr. Levi. I am determined to put it

down. What an infernal row the cradles make! What is this? 'A great flow of strangers into the camp, most thought to be honest, but some great roughs; also a good many Yankees and Germans come in at the south side.' What is this? 'A thief lynched yesterday. Flung head foremost into a hole, and stuck in the clay. Not expected to live after it.' Go it, my boys! Didn't I say law is the best for all parties, thieves included? Leave it, Andrew; I will examine it with the utmost minuteness."

The dog used fine words on these occasions, that he might pass for a pundit with his clique, and being now alone, he pored over his police-sheet as solemn and stern as if the nation depended on his investigations.

A short explosion of laughter from Andrew interrupted this grave occupation. The beak looked up with offended dignity, and, in spite of a mighty effort, fell a-sniggering; for, following Andrew's eyes, he saw two gig-umbrellas gliding erect and peaceful side by side among the pits.

"What on earth are they?"

"Chinamen, captain. They are too lazy to dig. They go about all day looking at the heaps and poking all over the camp. They have got eyes like hawks. It is wonderful, I am told, what they contrive to pick up first and last. What hats! Why, one of them would roof a tent."

"Hurroo!"

"What is up now?"

"Hurroo!" And up came Mary M'Dogherty, dancing and jumping as only Irish ever jumped. She had a lump of dim metal in one hand and a glittering mass in the other. She came up to the table with a fantastic spring, and spanged down the sparkling mass on it, bounding back one step like india-rubber, even as she struck the table.

"There, ould gintleman, what will ye be after giving me for that? Sure the luck has come to the right colleen at last."

"I deal but in the precious metals and stones," replied Isaac quietly.

"Sure, and isn't gould a precious metal?"

"Do you offer me this for gold? This is not even a metal. It is mica—yellow mica."

"Mikee!" cried Mary ruefully, with an inquiring look.

At this juncture in ran George hot as fire. "There!"

cried he triumphantly to Robinson, "was I right or wrong? What becomes of your gold-dust?" and he laid a nugget as big as his fist on the table.

"Ochone!" cried the Irishwoman, "they all have the luck barrin' poor Molly M'Dogherty."

The mica was handled, and George said to her compassionately, "You see, my poor girl, the first thing you should do is to heft it in your hand. Now, see, your lump is not heavy like——"

"Pyrites!" said Isaac dryly, handing George back his lump. "No! pyrites is heavier than mica, and gold than pyrites."

"Mr. Levi, don't go to tell me this is not a metal," remonstrated George rather sulkily, "for I won't have it."

"Nay, it is a metal," replied Levi calmly, "and a very useful metal, but not of the precious metals. It is iron."

"How can it be iron when it is yellow? And how is one to know iron from gold, at that rate?"

"Be patient, my son," said the old Jew calmly, "and learn. Take this needle. Here is a scale of gold; take it up on the needle-point. You have done it. Why? Because gold is a soft metal. Now take up this scale from your pyrites."

"I can't."

"No, because iron is a hard metal. Here is another childish test—a bloodstone, called by some the touchstone. Rub the pyrites on it. It colours it not—a hard metal. Now rub this little nugget of pure gold I have just bought."

"Ay! this stains the stone yellow."

"A soft metal. Here in this little phial is muriatic acid. Pour a drop on my nugget. The metal defies it. Now pour on your pyrites. See how it smokes and perishes. It cannot resist the acid. There are many other tests, but little needed. No metal, no earthly substance resembles gold in the least."

"Not to a Jew's eye," whispered Robinson.

"And much I marvel that any man, or even any woman, who has been in a gold-mine and seen and handled virgin gold, should take mica (here he knocked the mica clean off the table) or pyrites (here he spanged that in another direction) for a royal metal."

"I'll tell you what to do, Mary," began Robinson cheerfully. "Hollo! she is crying. Here is a faint heart."

"Och! captain dear, Pat and me we are kilt right out for want of luck. Oh! oh! We niver found but one gould, and that was mikee. We can't fall upon luck of any sort, good, bad, or indifferent; that is where I'm broke and spiled and kilt intirely. Oh! oh! oh!"

"Don't cry. You have chosen a bad spot."

"Captain avick, they do be turning it up like carrots on both sides of huz. And I dig right down as if I'd go through the orld back to dear old Ireland again. He! he! he! oh! oh! An' I do be praying to the Virgin at every stroke of the spade I do, and she sends us no gould at all at all, barrin' mikee, bad cess to't. Oh!"

"That is it. You are on two wrong tacks. You dig perpendicular and pray horizontal. Now you should dig horizontal and pray perpendicular."

"Och! captain, thim's hard words for poor Molly M'Dogherty to quarry through."

"What is that in your hand?"

"Sure it is an illigant lump of lead I found," replied poor Mary; the base metal rising in estimation since her gold turned out dross. "Ye are great with the revolver, captain," said she coaxingly; "ye'll be afther giving me the last pinch in life of the rale stuff for it?"

Robinson took the lump. "Good heavens! what a weight!" cried he. He eyed it keenly. "Come, Mr. Levi," cried he, "here is a find; be generous. She *is* unlucky."

"I shall be just," said the old man gravely. He weighed the lump and made a calculation on paper, then handed her forty sovereigns.

She looked at them. "Oh, now, it is mocking me ye are, old man;" and she would not take the money. On this he put it coolly down on the table.

"What is it at all?" asked she faintly.

"Platinum," replied Isaac coldly.

"And a magnificent lump of it!" cried Robinson warmly.

"Och, captain! och, captain dear! and what is plateenum at all, if ye plaze?"

"It is not like your mica," said Isaac. "See, it is heavier than gold, and far more precious than silver. It has noble qualities. It resists even the simple acid that dissolves gold. Fear not to take the money. I give you but your metal's value, minus the merchant's just profit. Platinum is the queen of the metals."

"Och, captain avick! och! och! come here till I ate you!" And she flung her arm round Robinson's neck, and bestowed a little furious kiss on him. Then she pranced away, then she pranced back. "Platinum, you are the boy; y'are the queen of the mitals. May the Lord bless you, ould gentleman, and the *Saints bless you!* and the VIRGIN MARY BLESS YOU!"* And she made at Isaac with the tears in her eyes to kiss him; but he waved her off with calm, repulsive dignity. "Hurroo!" And the child of Nature bounded into the air like an antelope, and frisked three times; then she made another set at them. "May you live till the skirts of your coat knock your brains out, the pair of ye! hurroo!" Then with sudden demureness, "An' here's wishing you all sorts of luck, good, bad, an' indifferent, my darlins. Plateenum for iver, and gould to the devil," cried she suddenly with a sort of musical war-shout, the last words being uttered three feet high in the air, and accompanied with a vague kick, utterly impossible in that position except to Irish, and intended, it is supposed, to send the obnoxious metal off the surface of the globe for ever. And away she danced.

Breakfast now! and all the cradles stopped at once.

"What a delightful calm!" said Robinson; "now I can study my police-sheet at my ease."

This morning, as he happened to be making no noise, the noise of others worried him.

"Mr. Levi, how still and peaceful they are when their time comes to grub! 'The still sow sups the kail,' as we used to say in the north; the English turn the proverb differently, they say, 'the silent hog——'"

"Jabber! jabber! jabber!—aie aie!"

"Hollo! there's a scrimmage! and there go all the fools rushing to see it. I'll go too!"

Alas! poor human nature; the row was this.

The peaceful children of the moon, whom last we saw gliding side by side vertical and seemingly imperturbable, had yielded to the *genius loci,* and were engaged in bitter combat, after the manner of their nation. The gig-umbrellas were resolved into their constituent parts; the umbrellas proper, or hats, lay on the ground—the sticks or men rolled over one another scratching and biting. Europe wrenched them asunder with much pain, and held

* These imprecations are printed on the ascending scale, by way of endeavour to show how the speaker delivered them.

them back by their tails, grinning horribly at each other and their long claws working unamiably.

The diggers were remonstrating; their morality was shocked.

"Is that the way to fight? What are fists given us for, ye varmint?"

Robinson put himself at the head of the general sentiment. "I must do a bit of beak here!" cried he; "bring those two tom-cats up before me!"

The proposal was received with acclamation. A high seat was made for the self-constituted beak, and Mr. Stevens was directed to make the Orientals believe that he was the lawful magistrate of the mine.

Mr. Stevens, entering into the fun, persuaded the Orientals who were now gig-umbrellas again, that Robinson was the mandarin who settled property, and possessed, among other trifles, the power of life and death. On this they took off their slippers before him, and were awe-struck, and secretly wished they had not kicked up a row, still more that they had stayed quiet by the banks of the Hoang-ho.

Robinson settled himself, demanded a pipe, and smoked calm and terrible, while his myrmidons kept their countenances as well as they could. After smoking in silence awhile, he demanded of the Chinese, "What was the row?"

1st Chinaman.—Jabber! jabber! jabber!

2nd Chinaman.—Jabber! jabber! jabber!

Both.—Jabber! jabber! jabber!

"What is that? Can't they speak any English at all?"

"No!"

"No wonder they can't conduct themselves, then!" remarked a digger.

The judge looked him into the earth for the interruption.

"You get the story from them, and tell it."

After a conference, Mr. Stevens came forward.

"It is about a nugget of gold, which is claimed by both parties."

Robinson.—Stop! Bring that nugget into court; that is the regular course.

Great interest began to be excited, and all their necks were craned forward, when Mr. Stevens took from one of the Chinese the cause of so sanguinary a disturbance, and placed it on the judge's table. A roar of laughter

followed—it was between a pea and a pin's head in magnitude.

Robinson.—You know this is shocking. Asia, I am ashamed of you. Silence in the court! Proceed with the evidence.

Mr. Stevens.—This one saw the gold shining, and he said to the other, "Ah!"

Robinson (writing his notes).—Said—to—the other—"Ah!" Stop! what is the Chinese for "ah?"

Stevens.—"Ah!"

Robinson.—Oh!

Andrew.—Come! the beggars have got hold of some of our words!

Robinson.—Silence in the court!

Andrew.—I ask pardon, captain.

Stevens.—But the other pounced on it first, so they both claim it.

Robinson.—Well! I call it a plain case.

Stevens.—So I told them.

Robinson.—Exactly! Which do you think ought to have it?

Stevens.—Why, I told them we have a proverb—"Losers seekers, finders keepers."

Robinson.—Of course; and which was the finder?

Stevens.—Oh, of course this one that—hum!—Well, to be sure, he only said "ah"—he did not point. Then perhaps—but on the other hand—hum!

Robinson.—Why, don't you see? but no!—yes! why it must be the one that—ugh! Drat you both! why couldn't one of you find it, and the other another?

Robinson was puzzled. At last he determined that this his first judgment should satisfy both parties.

"Remove the prisoners," said he. "Are they the prisoners or the witnesses? Remove them anyway, and keep them apart."

Robinson then searched his pockets, and produced a little gold swan-shot scarce distinguishable from the Chinese. He put this on the table, and took up the other

"Fetch in No. 1!"

The Chinaman came in with obeisances and misgivings; but when the judge signed to him to take up the gold, which he mistook for the cause of quarrel, his face lightened with a sacred joy. He receded, and with a polite gesture cleared a space; then advancing one foot

with large and lofty grace, he addressed the judge, whose mouth began to open with astonishment in slow-balanced and musical sentences. This done, he retired with three flowing salaams, to which the judge replied with three little nods.

"What on earth did the beggar say? What makes you grin, Mr. Stevens?"

Stevens.—He said—click!

Robinson.—Come! tell me first, laugh after!

Stevens.—He said, "May your highness flourish like a tree by the side of a stream that never overflows, yet is never dry, but glides—(click!)—even and tranquil as the tide of your prosperity——"

Robinson.—Well, I consent!

Stevens.—"May dogs defile the graves of your enemies!——"

Robinson.—With all my heart! provided I'm not dancing over them at the time.

Stevens.—"When satiated with earthly felicity, may you be received in paradise by seventy dark-eyed houris——"

Robinson.—Oh! my eye!

Stevens.—Click! "Each bearing in her hand the wine of the faithful, and may the applause of the good at your departure resemble the waves of the ocean beating musically upon rocky caverns. Thy servant, inexperienced in oratory, retires abashed at the greatness of his subject and the insignificance of his expressions." So then he cut his stick!

Robinson.—A very sensible speech! Well, boys, I'm not greedy; I take the half of that offer, and give you the rest. Bring in the other gentleman!

No. 2 advanced with reverences and misgivings. Robinson placed the gold on the table and assigned it to him. A sacred joy illumined him, and he was about to retire with deep obeisance.

"Where is his speech?" cried the judge ruefully.

Stevens explained to him that the other had returned thanks. On this No. 2 smiled assentingly, and advancing, delivered the following sentences—

"Your slave lay writhing in adversity, despoiled by the unprincipled. He was a gourd withered by the noonday sun until your virtues descended like the dew, and refreshed him with your justice and benignity. Wherefore hear now the benediction of him whom your

clemency has raised from despair. May your shadow increase and cover many lands. May your offspring be a nation dwelling in palaces with golden roofs and walls of ivory, and on the terraces may peacocks be as plentiful as sparrows are to the undeserving. May you live many centuries shining as you now shine; and at your setting may rivulets of ink dug by the pens of poets flow through meadows of paper in praise of the virtues that embellished you here on earth. Sing-tu-Che, a person of small note but devoted to your service, wishes these frivolous advantages to the Pearl of the West, on whom be honour."

Chorus of diggers.—My eye!

Robinson rose with much gravity and delivered himself thus—"Sing-tu-Che, you are a trump, an orator, and a humbug. All the better for you. May felicity attend you. *Heichster guchster—honi soit qui mal y pense—donner und blitzen—tempora mutantur—O mia cara* and *pax vobiscum.* The court is dissolved."

It was, and I regret to add that Judge Robinson's concluding sentences raised him greatly in the opinion of the miners.

"Captain knows a thing or two."

"If ever we send one to Parliament, that is the man."

"Hollo! you fellows, come here! come here!"

A rush was made towards Jem, who was roaring and gesticulating at Mr. Levi's table. When they came up, they found Jem black and white with rage, and Mr. Levi seated in calm indifference.

"What is it?" asked Robinson.

"The merchant refuses my gold."

"I refuse no man's gold," objected Levi coolly, "but this stuff is not gold."

"Not gold-dust!" cried a miner, and they all looked with wonder at the rejected merchandise.

Mr. Levi took the dust and poured it out from one hand to the other; he separated the particles and named them by some mighty instinct.

"Brass—ormolu—gilt platinum to give it weight; this is from Birmingham, not from Australia nor Nature."

"Such as it is, it cost me thirty pounds," cried Jem. "Keep it. I shall find him. My spade shall never go into the earth again till I'm quits with this one."

"That is right," roared the men, "bring him to us, and the captain shall sit in judgment again;" and the men's

countenances were gloomy, for this was a new roguery and struck at the very root of gold-digging.

"I'll put it down, Mr. Levi," said Robinson, after the others had gone to their work; "here is a new dodge; Brummagen planted on us so far from home. I will pull it down with a tenpenny cord, but I'll end it."

Crash! went ten thousand cradles; the mine had breakfasted. I wish I could give the European reader an idea of the magnitude of this sound, whose cause was so humble. I must draw on Nature for a comparison:—

Did you ever stand upon a rocky shore at evening when a great storm has suddenly gone down, leaving the waves about as high as they were while it raged? Then there is no roaring wind to dull the clamour of the tremendous sea as it lashes the long re-bellowing shore. Such was the sound of ten thousand cradles; yet the sound of each one was insignificant. Hence an observation and a reflection—the latter I dedicate to the lovers of antiquity—that multiplying sound magnifies it in a way science has not yet accounted for; and though men are all dwarfs, Napoleon included, man is a giant.

The works of man are so prodigious, they contradict all we see of any individual's powers; and even so when you had seen and heard one man rock one cradle, it was all the harder to believe that a few thousand of them could rival thunder, avalanches, and the angry sea lashing the long re-echoing shore at night. These miserable wooden cradles lost their real character when combined in one mighty human effort; it seemed as if giant labour had stretched forth an arm huge as an arm of the sea and rocked the enormous engine, whose sides were these great primeval rocks and its mouth a thundering sea.

Crash! from meal to meal! The more was Robinson surprised when full an hour before dinner-time this mighty noise all of a sudden became feebler and feebler, and presently human cries of a strange character made their way to his ear through the wooden thunder.

"What on earth is up now?" thought he; "an earthquake?"

Presently he saw at about half a mile off a vast crowd of miners making towards him in tremendous excitement. They came on, swelled every moment by fresh faces, and cries of vengeance and excitement were now heard, which the wild and savage aspect of the men rendered truly

terrible. At last he saw and comprehended all at a glance.

There were Jem and two others dragging a man along whose white face and knocking knees betrayed his guilt and his terror. Robinson knew him directly: it was Walker, who had been the decoy-duck the night his tent was robbed.

"Here is the captain! Hurrah! I've got him, captain. This is the beggar that peppered the hole for me, and now we will pepper him!"

A fierce burst of exultation from the crowd. They thirsted for revenge. Jem had caught the man at the other end of the camp, and his offence was known by this time to half the mine.

"Proceed regularly, Jem," said Robinson. "Don't condemn the man unheard."

"Oh no! He shall be tried, and you shall be the judge."

"I consent," said Robinson somewhat pompously.

Then arose a cry that made him reflect: "Lynch! Lynch! a seat for Judge Lynch!" and in a moment a judgment-seat was built with cradles, and he was set on high, with six strange faces scowling round him for one of his own clique. He determined to back out of the whole thing.

"No! no!" cried he; "that is impossible. I cannot be a judge in such a serious matter."

"Why not?" roared several voices.

"Why not? Because I am not a regular beak; because I have not got authority from the Crown." There was a howl of derision.

"We give you authority!"

"We order you to be judge!"

"We are King, Lords, and Commons!"

"Do what we bid you, or," added a stranger, "we will hang you and the prisoner with one rope!"

Grim assent of the surrounding faces—Robinson sat down on the judgment-seat not a little discomposed.

"Now then," remonstrated one, "what are you waiting for? Name the jury."

"Me!"—"Me!"—"Me!"—"I!"—"I!" and there was a rush for the office.

"Keep cool," replied another. "Lynch law goes quick, but it goes by rule. Judge, name the jury."

Robinson, a man whose wits seldom deserted him,

at once determined to lead since he could not resist. He said with dignity, "I shall choose one juryman from each of the different countries that are working in this mine, that no nation may seem to be slighted, for this gold belongs to all the world."

"Hurrah! Well done, judge. Three cheers for Judge Lynch!"

"When I call a country, give me a name, which I will inscribe on my report of the proceedings. I want a currency lad first."

"Here is one. William Parker."

"Pass over. France."

"Present. Pierre Chanot."

"Germany."

"Here. Hans Müller."

"Holland."

"Here. Jan Van der Stegen."

Spain and Italy were called, but no reply. "Asleep, I take it."

"United States."

"Here. Nathan Tucker."

Here Robinson, casting his eyes round, spied M'Laughlan, and being minded to dilute the severity of his jury, he cried out, "Scotland. M'Laughlan, you shall represent her."

No answer.

"M'Laughlan," cried several voices, "where are ye? Don't you hear Judge Lynch speak to you?"

"Come, M'Laughlan, come over; you are a respectable man."

Mr. M'Laughlan intimated briefly in his native dialect that he was, and intended to remain so; by way of comment on which he made a bolt from the judgment-hall, but was rudely seized and dragged before the judge.

"For Heaven's sake don't be a fool, M'Laughlan. No man must refuse to be a juryman in a trial by lynch. I saw a Quaker stoned to death for it in California."

"I guess I was thyar," said a voice behind the judge, who shifted uneasily.

M'Laughlan went into the jury-box with a meaning look at Robinson, but without another audible word.

"Mercy! mercy!" cried Walker.

"You must not interrupt the proceedings," said Judge Lynch.

"Haud your whist, ye gowk. Ye are no fand guilty yet," remonstrated a juror.

The jury being formed, the judge called the plaintiff.

"The man sold me a claim for thirty pound. I gave him the blunt because I saw the stuff was glittery. Well, I worked it, and I found it work rather easy, that is a fact."

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared the crowd, but with a horrible laughter, no placability in it.

"Well, I found lots of dust, and I took it to the merchant, and he says it is none of it gold. That is my tale."

"Have you any witnesses?"

"I don't know. Yes, the nigger; he saw it. Here, Jacky, come and tell them."

Jacky was thrust forward, but was interrupted by M'Laughlan as soon as he opened his mouth. The Scottish juror declined to receive evidence but upon oath. The judge allowed the objection.

"Swear him in, then," cried a hundred voices.

"Swear?" inquired Jacky innocently.

Another brutal roar of laughter followed.

Jacky was offended.

"What for you laugh, you stupid fellows? I not a common black fellow. I been to Sydney and learn all the white man knows. Jacky will swear," added he.

"Left your hond," cried M'Laughlan. "It is no sweering if you dinna left your hond."

"Dat so stupid," said Jacky, lifting his hand peevishly. This done, he delivered his evidence thus. "Damme I saw dis fellow sell dirt to dis fellow, and damme I saw dis fellow find a good deal gold, and damme I heard him say dis is a dam good job, and den damme he put down his spade and go to sell, and directly he come back and say damme I am done!"

"Aweel," said M'Laughlan, "we jaast refuse yon lad's evidence, the deevelish heathen."

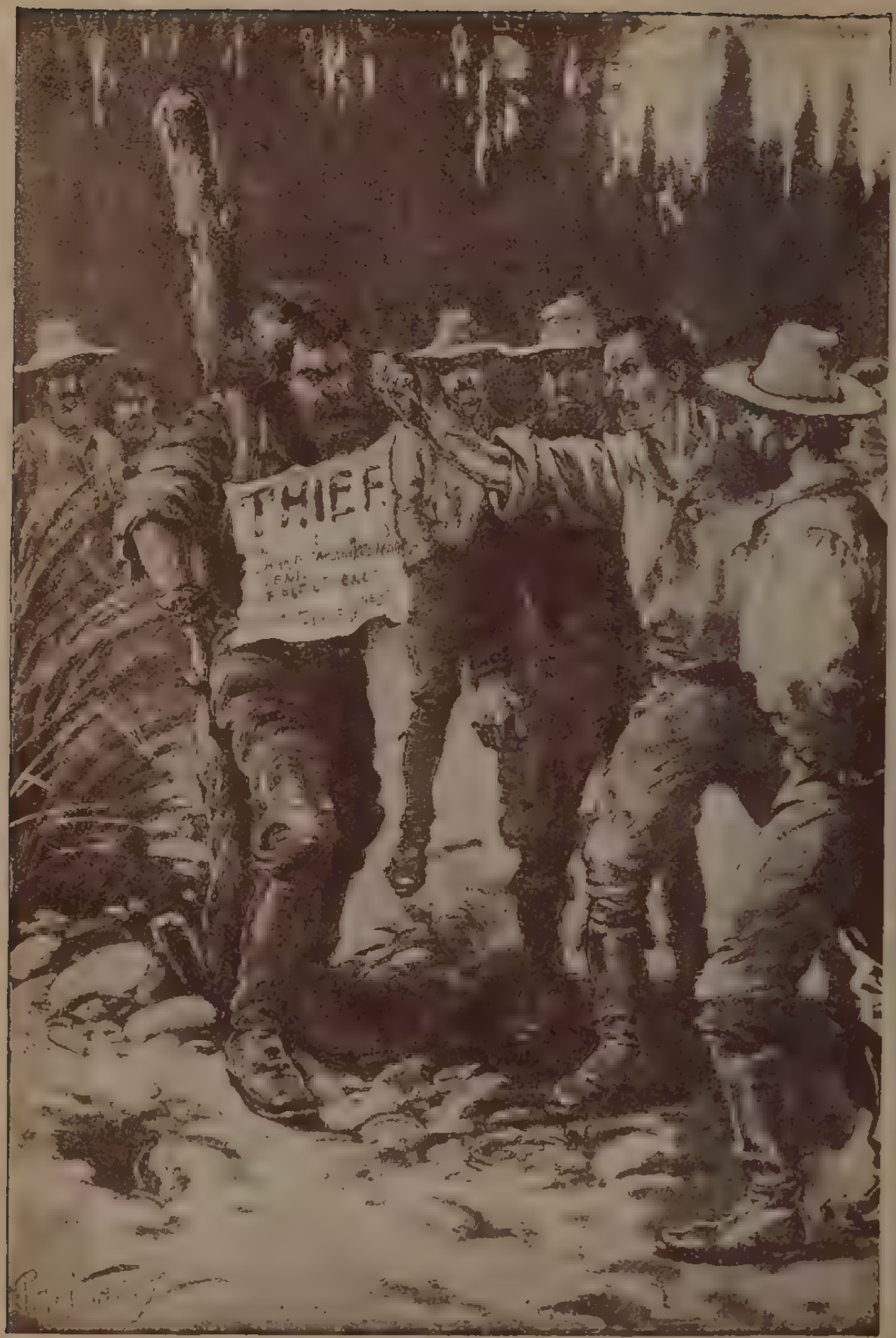
A threatening murmur.

"Silence! Hear the defendant."

Walker, trembling like an aspen, owned to having sold the claim, but denied that the dust was false. "This is what I dug out of it," said he, and he produced a small pinch of dust.

"Hand it to me," said the judge. "It seems genuine."

"Put it to the test. Call the merchant for a witness," cried another.



N.T.L. Brutus was tied up to a post. *Page* 508.

A party ran instantly for Levi. He refused to come. They dragged him with fearful menaces.

"A test, old man—a test of gold!"

The old Jew cast his eyes around, took in the whole scene, and, with a courage few of the younger ones would have shown, defied that wild mob.

"I will give you no test. I wash my hands of your mad passions and your mockeries of justice, men of Belial!"

A moment's silence and wonder, a yell of rage and a dozen knives in the air.

The judge rose hastily, and in a terrible voice that governed the tumult for an instant said, "Down knives! I hang the first man that uses one in my court." And during the momentary pause that followed this, he cried out, "He has given me a test. Run and fetch me the bottle of acid on his table."

"Hurrah! Judge Lynch for ever!" was now the cry, and in a minute the bottle was thrust into the judge's hand.

Young man," said Isaac solemnly, "do not pour, lest Heaven bring your soul to as keen a test one day. Who are you that judge your brother?"

Judge Lynch trembled visibly as the reverend man rebuked him thus, but fearing Isaac would go further, and pay the forfeit of his boldness, he said calmly, "Friends, remove the old man from the court, but use respect. He is an aged man."

Isaac was removed. The judge took the bottle and poured a drop on that small pinch of dust the man had last given him.

No effect followed.

"I pronounce this to be gold."

"There," put in M'Laughlan, "ye see the lad was no deceiving ye; is it his faut if a' the gowd is no the same?"

"No!" whimpered Walker eagerly, and the crowd began to whisper and allow he might be innocent.

The man standing behind the judge said with a cold sneer, "That is the stuff he did not sell—now pour on the stuff he sold."

These words brought back the prejudice against the prisoner, and a hundred voices shouted "Pour!" while their eyes gleamed with a terrible curiosity.

Judge Lynch, awe-struck by this terrible roar, now felt what it is to be a judge; he trembled and hesitated.

"Pour!" roared the crowd still louder and more fiercely.

M'Laughlan read the judge's feeling, and whimpered out, "Let it fa', lad—let it fa'!"

"If he does, our knives fall on him and you. Pour!"

Robinson poured: all their fierce eyes were fixed on the experiment. He meant to pour a drop or two, but the man behind him jogged his arm, and half the acid in the bottle fell upon Walker's dust.

A quantity of smoke rose from it, and the particles fizzed and bubbled under the terrible test.

"Trash! a rope—no! dig a hole and bury him—no! fling him off the rock into the water."

"Silence!" roared Robinson; "I am the judge, and it is for me to pronounce the verdict."

"Silence! hear Judge Lynch!" Silence was not obtained for five minutes, during which the court was like a forest of wild beasts howling.

"I condemn him to be exposed all day with his dust tied round his neck, and then drummed out of the camp."

This verdict was received first with a yell of derisive laughter, then with a roar of rage.

"Down with the judge!"

"We are the judges."

"To the rock with him!"

"Ay, to the rock with him."

With this an all-overpowering rush was made, and Walker was carried off up the rock in the middle of five hundred infuriated men.

The poor wretch cried, "Mercy! mercy!"

"Justice! dog," was the roar in reply. The raging crowd went bellowing up the rock like a wave, and gained a natural platform forty feet above the great deep pool that lay dark and calm below. At the sight of it the poor wretch screamed to wake the dead, but the roars and yells of vengeance drowned his voice.

"Put his dust in his pocket," cried one crueller than the rest.

Their thirst of vengeance was too hot to wait for this diabolical proposal; in a moment four of them had him by the shoulders and heels; another moment and the man was flung from the rock, uttering a terrible death-cry in the very air; then down his body fell like lead, and struck with a tremendous plunge the deep water, that splashed up a moment, then closed and bubbled over it.

From that moment the crowd roared no longer, but

buzzed and murmured, and looked down upon their work half-stupidly.

"Hush!"

"What is that?"

"It is his head!"

"He is up again!"

"Can he swim?"

"Fling stones on him!"

"No! let him alone, or we'll fling you atop of him."

"He is up, but he can't swim. He is only struggling! he is down again!"

He was down, but only for a moment; then he appeared again choking and gurgling.

"Mercy! mercy!"

"Justice, thieving dog!" was the appalling answer.

"Save me! save me! oh, save me! save me!"

"Save yourself, if you are worth it!" was the savage reply.

The drowning, despairing man's head was sinking again, his strength exhausted by his idle struggles, when suddenly on his left hand he saw a round piece of rock scarce a yard from him: he made a desperate effort and got his hand on it. Alas! it was so slimy he could not hold by it; he fell off into the water; he struggled up again, tried to dig his feet into the rock, but after a convulsive fling of a few seconds fell back—the slimy rock mocked his grasp. He came up again and clung, and cried piteously for help and mercy. There was none! —but a grim silence and looks of horrible curiosity at his idle struggles. His crime had struck at the very root of their hearts and lives. Then this poor cowardly wretch made up his mind that he must die. He gave up praying to the pitiless, who could look down and laugh at his death agony, and he cried upon the absent only. "My children! my wife! my poor Jenny!" and with this he shut his eyes, and struggling no more, sank quietly down! down! down! First his shoulders disappeared, then his chin, then his eyes, and then his hair. Who can fathom human nature? that sad, despairing cry, which was not addressed to them, knocked at the bosoms that all his prayers to them for pity had never touched. A hasty, low, and uneasy murmur followed it, almost as a report follows a flash.

"His wife and children!" cried several voices with

surprise; but there were two men this cry not only touched but pierced—the plaintiff and the judge.

"The man has got a wife and children," cried Jem in dismay, as he tried to descend the rocks by means of some diminutive steps. "They never offended me—he is gone down! —— me if I see the man drowned like a rat!" Hollo!—Splash!

Jem's foot had slipped, and as he felt he must go, he jumped right out, and fell twenty feet into the water

At this the crowd roared with laughter, and now was the first shade of good-nature mixed with the guffaw. Jem fell so near Walker, that on coming up he clutched the drowning man's head, and dragged him up once more from death. At the sight of Walker's face above water again, what did the crowd, think you?

They burst into a loud hurrah, and cheered Jem till the echoes rang again.

"Hurrah! Bravo! Hurrah!" pealed the fickle crowd.

Now Walker no sooner felt himself clutched than he clutched in return with the deadly grasp of a drowning man. Jem struggled to get free in vain. Walker could not hear or see, he was past all that; but he could cling, and he got Jem round the arms and pinned them. After a few convulsive efforts Jem gave a loud groan. He then said quietly to the spectators, "He will drown me in another half-minute." But at this critical moment, out came from the other extremity of the pool Judge Lynch swimming with a long rope in his hand; one end of this rope he had made into a bight ere he took the water. He swam behind Walker and Jem, whipped the noose over their heads and tightened it under their shoulders. "Haul!" cried he to Ede, who held the other end of the rope. Ede hauled, and down went the two heads.

A groan of terror and pity from the mob—their feelings were reversed.

"Haul quick, Ede," shouted Robinson, "or you will drown them, man alive."

Ede hauled hand over hand, and a train of bubbles was seen making all across the pool towards him; and the next moment two dripping heads came up to hand close together like cherries on a stalk; and now a dozen hands were at the rope, and the plaintiff and defendant were lifted bodily up on to the flat rock, which came nearly to the water's edge on this side the pool.

"Augh! augh! augh! augh!" gasped Jem. Walker said nothing: he lay white and motionless, water trickling from his mouth, nose, and ears.

Robinson swam quietly ashore. The rock thundered with cheers over his head.

The next moment "the many-headed beast" remembered that all this was a waste of time, and bolted underground like a rabbit, and dug and pecked for the bare life with but one thought left, and that was GOLD.

"How are you, Jem?"

"Oh, captain, oh!" gasped poor Jem, "I am choked—I am dead—I am poisoned—why, I'm full of water; bring this other beggar to my tent, and we will take a nanny-goat together."

So Jem was taken off hanging his head, and deadly sick, supported by two friends, and Walker was carried to the same tent, and stripped and rubbed and rolled up in a blanket; and lots of brandy poured down him and Jem, to counteract the poison they had swallowed.

Robinson went to Mr. Levi to see if he would lend him a suit while he got his own dried. The old Jew received my lord judge with a low, ironical bow, and sent Nathan to borrow the suit from another Israelite. He then lectured my Lord Lynch.

"Learn from this, young man, how easy it is to set a stone rolling downhill, how hard to stop it half-way down. Law must always be above the mob, or it cannot be law. If it fall into their hands, it goes down to their own level, and becomes revenge, passion, cruelty, anything but law. The madmen! they have lost two thousand ounces of gold, to themselves and to the world, while they have been wasting their time and risking their souls over a pound of brass, and aspiring to play the judge and the executioner, and playing nothing but the brute and the fool—as in the days of old." Mr. Levi concluded by intimating that there was very little common-sense left upon earth, and that little it would be lost time to search for among the Gentiles. Finally his discourse galled Judge Lynch, who thereupon resolved to turn the laugh against him.

"Mr. Levi," said he, "I see you know a thing or two; will you be so good as to answer me a question?"

"If it come within my knowledge," replied the senior with grave politeness.

"Which weighs the heaviest, sir, a pound of gold or a pound of feathers?" and he winked at Nathan, but looked in Isaac's face as demure as a Quakeress.

"A pound of feathers," replied Isaac.

Robinson looked half-puzzled, half-satirical.

"A childish question," said Isaac sternly. "What boy knows not that feathers are weighed by avoirdupois, and gold by troy weight, and consequently that a pound of feathers weighs sixteen ounces, and a pound of gold but twelve?"

"Well, that is a new answer," cried Robinson. "Good-bye, sir; you are too hard for me," and he made off to his own tent. It was a day of defeats.

The moment he was out of hearing, Isaac laughed, the only time he had done it during six years. And what a laugh! How sublimely devoid of merriment! a sudden, loud cackle of three distinct cachinni, not declining into a chuckle, as we do, but ending sharp in abrupt and severe gravity.

"I discomfited the young man, Nathan—I mightily discomfited him—Ha! ha! ho! Nathan, did you as I bade you?"

"Yes, master; I found the man, and I sent Samuel, who went hastily to him, and cried out, Mr. Meadows is in the camp and wishes to speak to you. Master, he started up in wonder, and his whole face changed; without doubt he is the man you suspected."

"Yes," said Isaac, reflecting deeply. "The man is Peter Crawley; and what does he here? Some deep villainy lies at the bottom of this, but I will fathom it, ay, and thwart it, I swear by the God of Abraham. Let me think awhile in my tent. Sit you at the receipt of gold."

The old man sat upon a divan in his tent, and pondered on all that had happened in the mine; above all, on the repeated attacks that had been made on that one tent. He remembered, too, that George had said sorrowfully to him more than once, "No letters for me, Mr. Levi? no letter again this month?" The shrewd old man tied these two threads together directly.

"All these things are one," said Isaac Levi.

Thus pondering, and patiently following out his threads, the old man paced a mile down the camp to the post-office, for he had heard the postman's horn, and he expected

important letters from England, from his friend and agent at Farnborough, old Cohen.

There were letters from England, but none in old Cohen's hand. He put them in his bosom with a disappointed look, and paced slowly and deeply pondering back towards his tent. He was about half-way, when, much to his surprise, a stone fell close to him. He took, however, no notice—did not even accelerate his pace or look round; but the next moment a lump of clay struck him on the arm. He turned round quivering with rage at the insult, and then he saw a whole band of diggers behind him, who, the moment he turned his face, began to hoot and pelt him.

"Who got poor Walker drowned? Ah! ah! ah!"

"Who refused to give evidence before Judge Lynch?" cried another. "Ah! ah! ah!"

There were clearly two parties in the mob. "Down with the Jew—the blood-sucker! We do all the work and he gets all the profit. Ah! ah! ah!"

And a lump of clay struck that reverend head, and almost stunned the poor old man. He sunk upon his knees, and in a moment his coat was torn to shreds; but with unexpected activity he wriggled himself free, and drew a dagger, long, bright, and sharp as a needle. His assailants recoiled a moment. The next a voice was heard from behind, "Get on both sides of him at once!"

Isaac looked and saw Peter Crawley. Then the old man trembled for his life, and cried, "Help! help!" and they hemmed him in and knocked his dagger out of his hand, and hustled and pommelled him, and would have torn him in pieces, but he slipped down, and two of them got in front and dragged him along the ground.

"To Walker's pool," cried brutus, putting himself at the head of those who followed.

All of a sudden Isaac, though half-insensible, heard a roar of rage that seemed to come from a lion—a whizz, a blow like a thunderclap—saw one of his assassins driven into the air, and falling like a dead clod three yards off, found himself dropped and a man striding over him. It was George Fielding, who stood a single moment snorting and blowing out his cheeks with rage, then went slap at the mob as a lion goes at sheep; seized one of the small ruffians by the knees, and by a tremendous effect of strength and rage, actually used him as a flail, and struck brutus with the man's head, and knocked that ruffian down

stunned, and his nose levelled with his cheeks. The mob recoiled a moment from this one hero. George knew it could be but for a moment, so he had no sooner felled brutus, and hurled the other's carcass in their faces, than he pounced on Isaac, whipped him on his back, and ran off with him.

He had got thirty yards with him ere the staggered mob could realise it all.

The mob recovered their surprise, and, with a yell like a pack of hounds bursting covert, dashed after the pair. The young Hercules made a wonderful effort, but no mortal man could run very fast so weighted. In spite of his start they caught him in about a hundred yards. He heard them close upon him—put the Jew down—and whispered hastily, "Run to your tent," and instantly wheeled round and flung himself at thirty men. He struck two blows and disabled a couple; the rest came upon him like one battering-ram, and bore him to the ground; but even as he went down he caught the nearest assailant by the throat, and they rolled over one another, the rest kicking savagely at George's head and loins. The poor fellow defended his head with one arm and his assailant's body for a little while, but he received some terrible kicks on the back and legs.

"Give it him on the head!"

"Kick his life out!"

"Settle his hash!"

They were so fiercely intent on finishing George that they did not observe a danger that menaced themselves.

As a round shot cuts a lane through a column of infantry, so clean came two files of special constables with their short staves severing the mob in two—crick, crack, crick, crick, crick, crick, crack, crack. In three seconds ten heads were broken with a sound just like glass bottles under the short, deadly truncheon, and there lay half a dozen ruffians writhing on the ground and beating the devil's tattoo with their heels.

"Charge back!" cried the head-policeman as soon as he had cut clean through.

But at the very word the cowardly crew fled on all sides yelling. The police followed in different directions a little way, and through this error three of the felled got up and ran staggering off. When the head-policeman saw that, he cried out, "Back, and secure prisoners."

They caught three who were too stupefied to run, and rescued brutus from George, who had got him by the throat and was hammering the ground with his head.

"Let go, George," cried policeman Robinson in some anxiety; "you are killing the man."

"Oh, I don't want to kill him neither," said George.

And he slowly withdrew his grasp and left off hammering with the rascal's head, but looked at him as if he would have preferred to have gone on a little longer. They captured the three others.

"Now secure them," cried Ede. "Out with your wipes."

"There is no need of wipes," said Robinson.

He then, with a slight blush, and rather avoiding George's eye, put his hand in his pockets and produced four beautiful sets of handcuffs, brand-new—polished to the nine. With a magical turn of the hand he handcuffed the three men, still avoiding George's eye. Unnecessary. George's sense of humour was very faint, and so was his sweetheart's—a sad defect.

Perhaps I may as well explain here how Robinson came so opportunely to the rescue. The fact is, that a week ago he had ordered a lot of constables' staves and four sets of handcuffs. The staves were nicely painted and lettered "Captain Robinson's Police, A, B, C," etc. They had just come home, and Robinson was showing them to Ede and his gang, when a hullabaloo was heard, and Levi was seen full half a mile off being hunted. Such an opportunity of trying the new staves was not to be neglected. Ede and his men jumped out of their claim and ran with Robinson to the rescue. But they would have been too late if George, who had just come into the camp at that very part, had not made his noble and desperate assault and retreat, which baffled the assailants for two precious minutes.

Robinson.—What shall we do with them now we have got them?

George.—Give them a kick apiece on their behinds, and let them go—the rubbish!

Robinson.—Not if I know it.

Ede.—I say blackguard 'em.

Robinson.—No, that would be letting ourselves down to their level. No, we will expose them as we did my old pal here before.

Ede.—Why, that is what I mean. Ticket them—put

a black card on them with their offence wrote out large.

No sooner said than done. All four were tied to posts in the sun and black-carded, or, as some spell it, placarded, thus :—

COWARD.

Attacked and abused an old man.

N.B.—Not hanged this time, because they got a licking then and there.

"Let us go and see after Mr. Levi, George."

"Well, Tom, I had rather not."

"Why not? he ought to be very much obliged to you."

"That is it, Tom. The old man is of rather a grateful turn of mind, and it is ten to one if he doesn't go and begin praising me to my face, and then that makes me I don't know which way to look. Wait till he has cooled upon it a bit."

"You are a rum one. Well, George, I have got one proposal you won't say no to. First I must tell you there really is a river of quartz in the country."

"Didn't I tell you?"

"Yes, and I didn't believe it. But I have spoken to Jacky about it, and he has seen it; it is on the other side of the bush. I am ready to start for it to-morrow, for there is little good to be done here now the weather has broken."

George assented with joy; but when Robinson suggested that Jacky would be very useful to pilot them through the bush, his countenance fell.

"Don't think of it," said he. "I know he is here, Tom, and I shan't go after him. But don't let him come near me, the nasty, little, creeping, murdering varmint. Poor Abner will never get over his tomahawk—not if he lives fifty years."

In short, it was agreed they should go alone at peep of day.

"I have talked it over with Jem already, and he will take charge of our tent till we come back."

"So be it."

"We must take some provisions with us, George."

"I'll go and get some cold meat and bread, Tom."

"Do! I am going to the tent."

Robinson, it is to be observed, had not been in his tent since George and he left it, and took their gold out of it, just before sunrise. As he now carried their joint wealth about his person, his anxiety was transferred.

Now at the door of the tent he was intercepted by Jem, very red in the face, partly with brandy, partly with rage. Walker, whose life he had saved, whom he had taken to his own tent, and whom Robinson had seen lying asleep in the best blanket, this Walker had absconded with his boots and half a pound of tobacco.

"Well, but you knew he was a rogue. Why did you leave him alone in your tent?"

"I only left him for a minute to go a few steps with you, if you remember, and you said yourself he was asleep. Well, the moment our backs were turned he must have got up and done the trick."

"I don't like it," said Robinson.

"No more don't I," said Jem.

"If he was not asleep, he must have heard me say I was going to cross the bush with my mate to-morrow at daybreak."

"Well, and what if he did?"

"He is like enough to have gone and told the whole gang."

"And what if he has?"

Robinson was about to explain to Jem that he now carried all the joint gold in his pockets, but he forbore. "It is too great a stake for me to trust anybody unless I am forced," thought he. So he only said, "Well, it is best to be prudent. I shall change the hour for starting."

"You are a cunning one, captain, but I really think you are over-careful sometimes."

"Jem," said the other gravely, "there is a mystery in this mine. There is a black gang in it, and that Walker is one of them. I think they have sworn to have my gold or my life, and they shan't have either, if I can help it. I shall start two hours before the sun."

He was quite right. Walker had been shamming sleep, and full four hours ago he had told his confederates, as a matter of course, all that he had heard in the enemy's camp.

Walker, a timid villain, was unprepared for the burst of savage exultation from brutus and Black Will that followed this intelligence. These two, by an instinct quick as lightning, saw the means of gratifying at one blow their cupidity and hate. Crawley had already told them he had seen Robinson come out of Levi's tent

after a long stay, and their other spies had told them his own tent had been left unguarded for hours. They put these things together, and conjectured at once that the men had now their swag about them in one form or other.

"When do they go?"

"To-morrow at break of day," he said.

"The bush is very thick!"

"And dark too!"

"It is just the place for a job."

"Will two of you be enough?"

"Plenty, the way we shall work."

"The men are strong and armed."

"Their strength will be no use to them, and they shan't get time to use their arms."

"For Heaven's sake shed no blood unnecessarily," said Crawley, beginning to tremble at the pool of crime to whose brink he had led these men.

"Do you think they will give up their swag while they are alive?" asked brutus scornfully.

"Then I wash my hands of it all," cried the little self-deceiving caitiff; and he affected to have nothing to do with it.

Walker was then thanked for his information, and he thought this was a good opportunity for complaining of his wrongs and demanding redress. This fellow was a thorough egotist, saw everything from his own point of view only.

Jem had dragged him before Judge Robinson; Robinson had played the beak and found him guilty; Levi had furnished the test on which he had been convicted. All these had therefore cruelly injured and nearly killed him.

Himself was not the cause. He had not set all these stones rolling by forging upon Nature and robbing Jem of thirty pounds. No! he could not see that, nor did he thank Jem one bit for jumping in and saving his life at risk of his own. "Why did he ever get him thrown in, the brute? If he was not quite drowned he was nearly, and Jem the cause."

His confederates soothed him with promises of vengeance on all these three his enemies, and soon after catching sight of one of them, Levi, they kept their word; they roused up some of the other diggers against Isaac on the plea that he had refused to give evidence against Walker, and so

they launched a mob and trusted to mob Nature for the rest. The recoil of this superfluous villainy was, as often happens, a blow to the head scheme.

brutus, who was wanted at peep of day for the dark scheme already hinted at, got terribly battered by George Fielding, and placarded, and, what was worse, chained to a post by Robinson and Ede. It became necessary to sound his body and spirit. One of the gang was sent by Crawley to inquire whether he felt strong enough to go with Black Will on that difficult and dangerous work to-morrow. The question put in a passing whisper was answered in a whisper.

"I am as strong as a lion for revenge. Tell them I would not miss to-morrow's work for all the gold in Australia." The lowering face spoke loud enough, if the mouth whispered.

The message was brought back to Black Will and Crawley.

"What energy!" said Crawley admiringly.

"Ay!" said Black Will, "that is your sort; give me a pal with his skin smarting and his bones aching for the sort of job that wood shall see to-morrow. Have they marked him?" he inquired with a strange curiosity.

"I am afraid they have; his nose is smashed frightful."

"I am glad of it; now we are brothers, and will have blood for blood."

"Your expressions are dreadfully terse," said Crawley, trying to smile, but looking scared instead; "but I don't understand your remark. You were not in the late unsuccessful attack on Mr. Levi, and you escaped most providentially in the night business—the men have not marked you, my good friend."

"Haven't they?" yelled the man with a tremendous oath. "Haven't they? LOOK HERE!" A glance was enough. Crawley turned wan and shuddered from head to foot.

CHAPTER LXVI.

We left Robinson and Jem talking at the entrance to the tent.

"Come in," said Robinson; "you will take care of this tent while we are gone."

Jem promised faithfully.

He then asked Robinson to explain to him the dodge of the gut-lines. Robinson showed him, and how the bells were rung at his head by the thief's foot.

Jem complimented him highly.

Robinson smiled, but the next moment sighed. "They will be too clever for us some of these dark nights; see how nearly they have nicked us again and again!"

"Don't be down on your luck, captain!"

"Jem, what frightens me is the villains getting off so; there they are to try again, and next time the luck will be theirs; it can't be always ours—why should it? Jem, there was a man in my tent last night."

"There is no denying that, captain."

"Well, Jem, I can't get it off my heart that I was to kill that man, or he me. Everything was on my side. I had my gut-lines, and I had a revolver and a cutlass—and I took up the cutlass like a fool; if I had taken up the revolver, the man would be dead. I took up the wrong, and that man will be my death. The cards never forgive! I had the odd trick, and didn't take it—I shall lose the game."

"No, ye shan't," cried Jem hastily. "What if the man got clear for the moment? We will hunt him out for you. You give me his description."

"I couldn't," said Robinson despondingly. "It was so dark! Here is his pistol, but that is no use. If I had but a clue, ay, ever so slight, I'd follow it up; but no, there is none.—Hollo! what is the matter? What is it? What on earth is the man looking at like that?"

"What was you asking for?" stammered Jem. "Wasn't it a clue?"

"Yes."

Robinson got up and came to Jem, who was standing with dilated eyes looking at the ground in the very corner of the tent. He followed the direction of Jem's eyes, and was instantly transfixed with curiosity and rising horror.

"Take it up, Jem," he gasped.

"No, you take it up! it was you who——"

"No—yes! there is George's voice. I wouldn't let him see such a thing for the world. O God! here is another."

"Another?"

"Yes, in the long grass! and there is George's voice. Come out, Jem. Not a word to George for the world. I want to talk to you. If it hasn't turned me sick! I should make a poor hangman. But it was in self-defence, thank Heaven for that!"

"Where are you going in such a hurry, Tom?" said George.

"Oh, only a little way with Jem."

"Don't be long; it is getting late."

"No, George!"

"Jem, this is an ugly job!"

"An ugly job, no! —— him, I wish it was his head. Give them me, captain."

"What, will you take charge of them?"

"That I will, captain, and what is more, I'll find your enemy out by them, and when you come back he shall be in custody waiting your orders. Give them me."

"Yes, take them. Oh, but I am glad to be rid of them. What a ghastly look they have!"

"I don't care for their looks. I am right glad to see them—they are a clue, and no mistake. Keep dark to-night. Don't tell this to Ede—he is a good fellow, but chatters too much—let me work it out. I'll find the late owner double quick," said Jem with a somewhat brutal laugh.

"Your orders about the prisoners, captain?" cried Ede, coming up.

Robinson reflected.

"Turn them all loose—but one."

"And what shall I do with him?"

"Hum! Put a post up in your own tent."

"Yes."

"Tie him to it in his handcuffs. Give him food enough."

"And when shall we loose him?"

"At noon to-morrow."

"It shall be done! but you must come and show me which of the four it is."

Robinson went with Ede and his men.

"Turn this one loose," said he. It was done on the instant.

"And this.—And this.—And" (laying his finger on brutus) "keep this one prisoner in your tent handcuffed and chained till noon to-morrow."

At the touch brutus trembled with hate; at the order his countenance fell like Cain's.

Full two hours before sunrise the patrol called Robinson by his own order, and the friends made for the bush with a day's provision and their blankets, their picks, and their revolvers. When they arrived at the edge of the bush, Robinson halted and looked round to see if they were followed. The night was pretty clear; no one was in

sight. The men struck rapidly into the bush, which at this part had been cut and cleared in places, lying as it did so near a mine.

"What, are we to run, Tom?"

"Yes! I want to get to the river of quartz as soon as possible," was the dry answer.

"With all my heart."

After running about half a mile George pulled up, and they walked.

"What do you keep looking behind for, Tom?"

"Oh, nothing."

"You fidget me, Tom!"

"Can't help it. I shall be like that till daylight. They have shaken my nerves among them."

"Don't give way to such nonsense. What are you afraid of?"

"I am not afraid of anything. Come, George, another run."

"Oh, as you like: this beats all."

This run brought them to the end of the broad road, and they found two smaller paths; after some hesitation, Robinson took the left-hand one, and it landed them in such a terrible thick scrub they could hardly move. They forced their way through it, getting some frightful scratches, but after struggling with it for a good half-hour, began to fear it was impenetrable and interminable, when the sun rising showed them a clear space some yards ahead. They burst through the remainder of the scrub, and came out upon an old clearing full a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad. They gave a hurrah at the sight of it, but when they came to walk on it, the ground was clay, and so sticky with a late shower that they were like flies moving upon varnish, and at last were fain to take off their shoes and stockings and run over it on the tips of their toes. At the end of this opening they came to a place like the "Seven Dials"—no end of little paths into the wood, and none very promising. After a natural hesitation, they took the one that seemed to be most on their line of march, and followed it briskly till it brought them plump upon a brook, and there it ended. Robinson groaned.

"Confound the bush!" cried he. "You were wrong not to let me bring Jacky. What is to be done?"

"Go back."

"I hate going back. I would rather go thirty miles ahead than one back. I've got an idea: off shoes and paddle up the stream; perhaps we shall find a path that comes to it from the other side."

They paddled up the stream a long way, and at last, sure enough they found a path that came down to the stream from the opposite side. They now took a hasty breakfast, washing it down with water from the brook, then dived into the wood.

The sun was high in heaven, yet still they had not got out of the bush.

"I can't make it out, George; there is nothing to steer by, and these paths twist and turn so. I don't think we shall do any good till night. When I see the Southern Cross in the sky I shall be able to steer north-east. That is our line."

"Don't give in," said George; "I think it looks clearer ahead. I believe we are at the end of it."

"No such luck, I am afraid," was the despondent reply.

For all that, in a few yards more they came upon an open place. They could not help cheering. "At last!" cried they. But this triumph gave way to doubts.

"I am afraid we are not clear yet," said Robinson. "See, there is wood again on the other side. Why, it is that sticky clay again. Why, George, it is the clearing we crossed before breakfast."

"You are talking nonsense, Tom," cried George angrily.

"No, I am not," said the other sadly. "Come across. We shall soon know by our footsteps in the clay."

Sure enough, half-way across they found a track of footsteps. George was staggered. "It is the place, I really think," said he. "But, Tom, when you talk of the footsteps, look here! You and I never made all these tracks. This is the track of a party."

Robinson examined the ground.

"Tracks of three men: two barefoot, one in nailed boots."

"Well, is that us?"

"Look at the clearing, George; you have got eyes. It *is* the same."

"So 'tis; but I can't make out the three tracks."

Robinson groaned. "I can. This third track has come since we went by."

"No doubt of that, Tom. Well?"

"Well, don't you see?"

"No—what?"

"You and I are being hunted."

George looked blank a moment. "Can't we be followed without being hunted?"

"No; others might, but not me. We are being hunted," said Robinson sternly. "George, I am sick of this; let us end it. Let us show these fellows they are hunting lions and not sheep. Is your revolver loaded?"

"Yes."

"Then come on!" And he set off to run, following the old tracks. George ran by his side, his eyes flashing with excitement. They came to the brook. Robinson showed George that their pursuer had taken some steps down the stream. "No matter," said he, "don't lose time, George; go right up the bank to our path. He will have puzzled it out, you may take your oath."

Sure enough they found another set of footsteps added to their own. Robinson paused before entering the wood. He put fresh caps on his revolver. "Now, George," said he in a low voice, "we couldn't sleep in this wood without having our throats cut, but before night I'll be out of danger or in my grave, for life is not worth having in the midst of enemies. Hush! hus-s-sh! You must not speak to me but in a whisper."

"No!" whispered George.

"Nor rustle against the boughs."

"No, I won't," whispered George. "But make me sensible, Tom. Tell me what all this caution is to lead to. What are you doing?"

"I AM HUNTING THE HUNTER!" hissed Robinson with concentrated fury; and he glided rapidly down the trodden path, his revolver cocked, his ears pricked, his eye on fire, and his teeth clenched. George followed silent and cautious, his revolver ready cocked in his hand.

As they glided thus, following their own footsteps, and hunting their hunter with gloomy brows and nerves quivering, and hearts darkening with anger and bitterness, sudden a gloom fell upon the wood—it darkened and darkened. Meantime a breeze chill as ice disturbed its tepid and close air, forerunner of a great wind which was soon heard, first moaning in the distance, then howling and rushing up, and sweeping over the tall trees and rocking them like so many bulrushes. A great storm was coming.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THIS very afternoon Mr. Levi came to inquire for George Fielding. Unable to find him, he asked of several diggers where the young man was; he could get no information till Jem saw him, and came and told him.

Now when he heard they were gone, and not expected back for some days, Isaac gave quite a start, and showed a degree of regret and vexation that Jem was puzzled to account for.

On reflection he begged Jem to come to his tent; there he sat down and wrote a letter.

"Young man," said he, "I do entreat you to give this to George Fielding the moment he returns to the camp. Why did he go without coming to see me? My old heart is full of misgivings."

"You needn't have any, sir," said Jem, surprised at the depth of feeling in the old Jew's face and voice. "He shall have the letter, you may depend."

Levi thanked him. He then said to Nathan, "Strike the tents, collect our party, and let us be gone."

"What, going to leave us, sir?"

"Yes, young man, this very hour."

"Well, now, I am sorry for that, and so will the captain be and his pal, that you think so much of."

"We shall not be long parted," said the old man in his sweet, musical, Eastern accent, "not very long, if you are faithful to your trust and give the good young man my letter. May good angels hover round him! may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob guard him!"

"Amen!" said rough Jem; for the reverend face glowed with piety and the voice was the voice of prayer.

Suddenly an unpleasant reflection occurred to Jem.

"Well, but if you go, who is to buy our gold-dust?"

"The Christian merchants," said Isaac with an indifferent air.

"But they are such —— Jews," cried Jem inadvertently. "I mean—I mean——" and rough as he was, he looked as if he could have bitten his tongue off.

"I know what you mean," said Isaac sadly. He added, "Such as they are, they are all you have now. The old Jew was hunted, and hooted, and insulted in this place

yesterday; here then he trades no more; those who set no value on him can, of course, supply his place."

"The blackguards!" cried Jem; "the ruffians! I wish I had seen them. Come, Mr. Levi, that was not the mine: that was only the riffraff—you might forgive us that."

"I never forgive," was the calm reply.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A TREMENDOUS snow-storm fell upon the mine and drove Jem into his tent, where he was soon after joined by Jacky, a circumstance in itself sufficient to prove the violence of the storm, for Jacky loathed indoors; it choked him a good deal. The more was Jem surprised when he heard a lamentable howl coming nearer and nearer, and a woman burst into his tent, a mere pillar of snow, for she was covered with a thousand flakes, each as big as a lady's hand.

"Ochone! ochone! ochone!" cried Mary M'Dogherty, and on being asked what was the matter, she sat down and rocked herself and moaned and cried, "Ochone! och, captain avick, what will I do for you; and who will I find to save you? an' oh, it is the warm heart and the kind heart that ye had to poor Molly M'Dogherty, that ud give her life to save yours this day."

"The captain!" cried Jem in great alarm. "What is wrong with the captain?"

"He is lying cowld and stiff in the dark, bloody wood. Och, the murthering villains! och, what will I do at all? Och, captain avick, warm was your heart to the poor Irish boys, but it is cowld now. Ochone! ochone!"

"Woman!" cried Jem in great agitation, "leave off blubbering, and tell me what is the matter."

Thus blandly interrogated, Mary told him a story (often interrupted with tears and sighs) of what had been heard and seen yester-eve by one of the Irish boys, a story that turned him cold, for it left on him the same impression it had left on the warm-hearted Irishwoman, that at this moment his good friend was lying dead in the bush hard by.

He rose and loaded Robinson's double-barrelled gun; he loaded it with bullets, and as he rammed them fiercely down, he said angrily, "Leave off crying and wringing

your hands; what on earth is the use of that? Here goes to save him or to revenge him."

"An' och, James, take the wild Ingine wid ye; they know them bloody murthering woods better than our boys, glory be to God for taching them that same."

"Of course I shall take him. You hear, Jacky! will you show me how to find the poor dear captain and his mate, if they are in life?"

"If they are alive, Jacky will find them a good deal soon—if they are dead, still Jacky will find them."

The Irishwoman's sorrow burst out afresh at these words. The savage then admitted the probability of that she dreaded.

"And their enemies—the cowardly villains—what will you do to them?" asked Jem, black with rage.

Jacky's answer made Mary scream with affright, and startled even Jem's iron nerves for a moment. At the very first word of the Irishwoman's story, the savage had seated himself on the ground with his back turned to the others, and, unnoticed by them, had rapidly painted his face with the war-paint of his tribe. Words cannot describe the ghastly terrors, the fiendish ferocity, these traditional lines and colours gave his countenance. This creature, that looked so like a fiend, came erect into the middle of the tent with a single bound, as if that moment vomited forth by hell, and yet with a grander carriage and princelier presence than he had worn in time of peace; and even as he bounded he crossed his tomahawk and narrow wooden shield, to signify that his answer was no vulgar asseveration, but a vow of sacred war.

"KALINGALUNGA WILL KILL THEM AND DRINK THEIR BLOOD."

Kalingalùnga glided from the tent. Jem followed him. The snow fell in flakes as large as a lady's hand, and the air was dark. Jem could not see where the hunter was taking him, but he strode after him and trusted to his sagacity.

Five hours' hard walking and then the snow left off. The air became clear, and to Jem's surprise the bush, instead of being on his right hand, was now on his left, and there on its skirts about a mile off was the native camp. They had hardly come in sight of it when it was seen to break from quietude into extraordinary bustle.

"What is up?" asked Jem.

The hunter smiled and pointed to his own face—

"Kalingalùnga painted war."

"What eyes the beggars must have!" said Jem.

The next minute a score of black figures came tearing up in such excitement that their long rows of white teeth and the whites of their eyes flashed like bude-lights in their black heads.

Kalingalùnga soon calmed them down by letting them know that he was painted for a private, not a national feud. He gave them no further information. I suspect he was too keen a sportsman to put others on the scent of his game. He went all through the camp, and ascertained from the stragglers that no men answering the description of George and Robinson had passed out of the wood.

"They are in the wood," said he.

He then ordered a great fire—bade Jem dry his clothes and eat; he collected two of his wives and committed Jem to their care, and glided like a panther into the wood.

What with the great heat succeeding to the great cold, and the great supper the gins gave him, Jem fell fast asleep. It was near daylight when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and there was Kalingalùnga.

"Not a track on the snow!"

"No? then let us hope they are not in the wood." The hunter hung his head.

"Me tink they are in the wood," said he gravely.

Jem groaned. "Then they are lying under the soil of it, or in some dark pit."

Kalingalùnga reflected; he replied to this effect—"That there were no more traces of an assassin than of victims, consequently that it was impossible to know anything, and that it was a good deal too stupid to speak a good deal knowing nothing."

All this time Jem's fear and rage and impatience contrasted greatly with the philosophic phlegm of the Pict, who looked so fierce and took it all so cool, ending with an announcement that now Kalingalùnga would sleep a good deal.

The chief was soon asleep, but not till he had ordered his gins to wake him the moment the snow should be melted. This occurred at noon, and after snatching a hasty meal, he put a tomahawk into Jem's hands and darted into the bush.

All the savage's coldness disappeared now he was at work. He took Jem right across the wood from south-east to north-west. Nothing stopped him. When the scrub was thick above but hollow below, he threw himself on his

belly and wriggled along like a snake. When it was all thick, he hacked into it with fury and forced a path. When it was impenetrable, he went round it, and by some wonderful instinct got into the same line again. Thus they cut clean across the wood, but found no tracks. Then the savage being out in the open, trotted easily down the wood-side to the south-west point—here he entered, and took a line straight as an arrow to the north-east.

It was about five in the afternoon. Kalingalùnga was bleeding all over with scratches, and Jem was torn to pieces and done up. He was just about to tell the other that he must give in, when Kalingalùnga suddenly stopped and pointed to the ground—"Track!"

"What of?"

"A white man's shoe."

"How many are there?"

"One."

Jem sighed. "I doubt it is a bad job, Jacky," said he.

"Follow—not too close," was the low reply.

And the panther became a serpent, so smooth and undulating were the motions with which he glided upon the track he had now discovered.

Jem, well aware that he could not move noiselessly like the savage, obeyed him and crept after at some distance.

The savage had followed the man's footsteps about half a mile, and the white man the savage, when suddenly both were diverted from their purpose. Kalingalùnga stood still and beckoned Jem. Jem ran to him, and found him standing snuffing the air with his great, broad nostrils like a stag.

"What is it?"

"White fellow burn wambiloa wood."

"How d'ye know? how d'ye know?"

"Wambiloa wood smell a good way off when him burn."

"And how do you know it is a white man?"

"Black fellow never burn wambiloa wood; not good to burn that. Keep it for Milmeridien."

The chief now cut off a few of his long hairs and held them up to ascertain the exact direction of the wind. This done, he barked a tree to mark the spot to which he had followed the trail and, striking out into quite a different direction, he hunted by scent.

Jem expected to come on the burning wambiloa very soon, but he underrated either the savage's keen scent or

the acrid odour of the sacred wood—perhaps both. They had gone half a mile at least before his companion thought it necessary to show any caution. At last he stopped short, and then Jem smelled a smell as if "cinnamon and ginger, nutmegs and cloves" were all blazing in one bonfire. With some difficulty he was prevailed on to stand still and let the subtle native creep on, nor would he consent to be inactive until the other solemnly vowed to come back for him and give him his full share of the fighting. Then Kalingalùnga went gliding like a shadow and flitted from tree to tree.

Woe be to the enemy the subtle, noiseless, pitiless, remorseless savage surprises; he has not put on his war-paint in sport or for barren show.

CHAPTER LXIX.

A MAN was hunting Robinson and George Fielding, and they were hunting him; both parties inflamed with rage and bitterness; both master of the other's fate, they thought.

A change of wind brought a fall of snow, and the fall of snow baffled both parties in five minutes. Down came the Australian flakes large as a woman's hand (I am not romancing), and effaced the tracks of the pursuing and pursued and pursuers. So tremendous was the fall that the two friends thought of nothing but shelter. They threw their blankets over their heads and ran hither and thither looking for a friendly tree. At last they found an old tree with a prodigious stem that parted about ten feet up into two forks. With some effort they got up into this cleft, and then they were on a natural platform. Robinson always carried nails in his pocket, and he contrived to nail the two blankets to the forks so as to make a screen. They then took out their provisions and fortified themselves with a hearty supper.

As they were eating it, they were suddenly startled by an explosion so tremendous that their tree seemed to have been struck by lightning. Out went Robinson with his mouth full on to a snowdrift four feet high. He looked up and saw the cause of the fracas. A large bough of a neighbouring tree had parted from the trunk with the

enormous weight of the snow. Robinson climbed back to George and told him. Supper recommenced, but all over the wood at intervals they now heard huge forks and boughs parting from their parent stems with a report like a thirty-two pounder ringing and echoing through the wood; others so distant that they were like crackers.

These sounds were very appalling in the ghostly wood. The men instinctively drew closer to each other, but they were no chickens; use soon hardened them even to this. They settled it that the forks they were sitting on would not give way, because there were no leaves on them to hold a great burden of snow, and soon they yielded to nature and fell fast asleep in spite of all the dangers that hemmed them.

At his regular hour, just before sunrise, Robinson awoke and peeped from below the blanket. He shook George.

"Get up directly, George. We are wasting time when time is gold."

"What is it?"

"What is it! There is a pilot in the sky that will take us out of this cursed trap if the day does not come and spoil all."

George's eye followed Robinson's finger, and in the centre of the dark vault of heaven this glittered :—

CHAPTER LXX.

"I KNOW it, Tom. When I was sailing to this country, we came to a part where the north star went down and down to the water's edge, and this was all we got in exchange for it."

"George," said Tom rather sternly, "how do you know they don't hear us, and here we are surrounded by enemies, and would you run down our only friend? That silver star will save our lives, if they are to be saved at all. Come on; and, George, if you were to take your revolver and blow out my brains, it is no more than I deserve for sleeping away the precious hours of night, when I ought to have been steering out of this cursed timber-net by that blessed star."

With these words Robinson dived into the wood, steering due east by the Southern Cross. It was like going through a frozen river. The scrub was loaded with snow, which it discharged in masses on the travellers at every step.

"Keep your revolver dry in your hat, and your lucifers too," cried Robinson. "We shall have to use them both, ten to one. As to our skins, that is hopeless."

Then the men found how hard it is to take a line and keep it in the Australian bush. When the Southern Cross was lost in a cloud, though but for a minute, they were sure to go all wrong, as they found upon its reappearance; and sometimes the scrub was impenetrable, and they were forced to go round it and walk four hundred yards, advancing eastward but twenty or thirty. Thus they battled on till the sun rose.

"Now we shall be all in the dark again," said poor Robinson; "here comes a fog."

"Stop, Tom," said George; "oughtn't we to make this good before we go on?"

"What do you mean?"

"We have come right by the star so far, have we not?"

"Yes."

"Then let us bark fifty of these trees for a mark. I have seen that varmint Jacky do that."

"A capital idea, George; out with our knives—here goes!"

"No breakfast to-day, Tom."

"No, George, nor dinner either till we are out of the wood."

These two poor fellows walked, and ran, and crept, and struggled all day, sometimes hoping sometimes desponding. At last, at five o'clock in the afternoon, their bellies gnawed with hunger, their clothes torn to rags, their skin bleeding, they came out upon some trees with the bark stripped. They gave one another a look that words can hardly paint. They were the trees they had barked twelve hours ago!

The men stood silent—neither cared to tell the other all he felt—for now there crept over these two stout bosoms a terrible chill, the sense of a danger new to them in experience, but not new in report. They had heard of settlers and others who had been lost in the fatal labyrinth of the Australian bush, and now they saw how easily it might be true.

"We may as well sit down here and rest: we shall do no good till night. What, are you in pain, George?"

"Yes, Tom, a little."

"Where?"

"Something gnaws my stomach like an adder."

"Oh, that is the soldier's gripes," said Tom, with a ghastly attempt at a jest. "Poor George!" said he kindly, "I daresay you never knew what it was to go twenty-four hours without food before."

"Never in my life, Tom."

"Well, I have, and I'll tell you the only thing to do: when you can't fill the bread-basket—shut it. Go to sleep till the Southern Cross comes out again."

"What, sleep in our dripping clothes?"

"No, we will make a roaring fire with these strips of bark; they are as dry as tinder by now."

A pyre four feet high was raised, the strips being laid from north to south and east to west alternately, and they dried their blankets and warmed their smoking bodies.

"George, I have got two cigars; they must last us two days."

"Oh, I'm no great smoker—keep them for your own comfort."

Robinson wore a sad smile.

"We can't afford to smoke them; this is to chew; it is not food, George, but it keeps the stomach from eating

itself. We must do the best for our lives we can for Susan's sake."

"Give it me, Tom; I'll chew it, and thank you kindly. You are a wise companion in adversity, Tom; it is a great grief to me that I have brought you into this trouble, looking for what I know you think is a mare's nest, as the saying is."

"Don't talk so, George. True pals like you and me never reproach one another; they stand and fall together like men. The fire is warm, George, that is one comfort."

"The fire is well enough, but there's nothing down at it. I'd give a hundred pounds for a mutton-chop."

The friends sat like sacrifices by the fire and chewed their cigars in silence with foreboding hearts. After a while, as the heat laid hold of him, George began to doze. Robinson felt inclined to do the same; but the sense that perhaps a human enemy might be near, caused him to fight against sleep in his exposed locality; so whenever his head bobbed down, he lifted it sharply and forced his eyes open. It was on one of these occasions that, looking up, he saw set as it were in a frame of leaves a hideous countenance glaring at him; it was painted in circular lines, red, blue, and white.

"Get up, George," roared Robinson; "they are upon us!"

And both men were on their feet, revolvers pointed. The leaves parted, and out came this diabolical face, which they had never seen before, but with it a figure they seemed to know and a harsh cackle they instantly recognised, and it sounded like music to them.

"Oh, my dear Jacky," cried George, "who'd have thought it was you? Well, you are a godsend! Good afternoon! Oh, Jacky! how d'ye do?"

"Jacky not Jacky now, cos 'um a good deal angry and paint war. Kalingalùnga berywelltanku' (he always took these four words for one). Now I go fetch white fellow;" and he disappeared.

"Who is he going to fetch? Is it the one that was following us?"

"No doubt. Then, Tom, it was not an enemy after all?"

Jacky came back with Jem, who, at sight of them alive and well, burst into extravagances. He waved his hat round his head several times and then flung it into a

tree; then danced a *pas seul* consisting of steps not one of them known at the opera-house, and chanted a song of triumph the words of which were Ri tol de riddy iddy dol, and the ditty naught; finally, he shook hands with both.

"Never say die!"

"Well, that is hearty! and how thoughtful of him to come after us, and above all to bring Jacky!"

"That it was," replied George. "Jem," said he with feeling, "I don't know but what you have saved two men's lives."

"If I don't, it shan't be my fault, farmer."

George.—Oh, Jacky, I am so hungry! I have been twenty-four hours without food.

Kalingalùnga.—You stupid fellow to go without food; always a good deal food in bush.

George.—Is there? Then for Heaven's sake go and get us some of it.

Kalingalùnga.—No need go; food here.

He stepped up to the very tree against which George was standing, showed him an excrescence on the bark, made two clean cuts with his tomahawk, pulled out a huge white worm and offered it George. George turned from it in disgust; the wild chief grinned superior and ate it himself, and smacked his lips with infinite gusto.

Meantime his quick eye had caught sight of something else. "A good deal dinner in dis tree," said he, and he made the white men observe some slight scratches on the bark. "Possum claws go up tree." Then he showed them that there were no marks with the claw reversed, a clear proof the animal had not come down. "Possum in tree."

The white men looked up into the bare tree with a mixture of wonder and incredulity. Jacky cut steps with his tomahawk and went up the main stem, which was short, and then up a fork, one out of about twelve; among all these he jumped about like a monkey till he found one that was hollow at the top.

"Throw Kalingalùnga a stone, den he find possum a good deal quick."

They could not find a stone for their lives, so being hungry, Robinson threw a small nugget of gold he had in his pocket. Jacky caught it, placed it at the top of the hollow fork and let it drop. Listening keenly, his

fine ear heard the nugget go down the fork, striking the wood first one side then another, and then at a certain part sound no more. Down he slips to that silent part, makes a deep cut with his tomahawk just above the spot, thrusts in his hand and pulls out a large opossum, yelling and scratching and emitting a delicious scent in an agony of fear. The tomahawk soon silenced him, and the carcass fell among the applauding whites. Now it was Robinson's turn; he carved the raw animal for greater expedition, and George helped him to wrap each limb and carcass in a thin covering of clay. Thus prepared, it was thrust into the great pile of burning ashes.

"Look yonder, do! look at that, Jem! Why, Jem, what are you up to, patrolling like a sentinel out there?"

"Never you heed Jem," was the dry reply; "you mind the roast, captain, and I'll mind—my business," and Jem continued to parade up and down, with his gun cocked and his eye piercing the wood.

To Robinson's repeated and uneasy inquiries what meant this pantomime, Jem persisted in returning no answer but this, "You want your dinner, captain: eat your dinner and then I'll hoffer a hobservation; meantime, as these woods are queer places, a little hextra caution is no sin."

The pie-dishes were now drawn out of the ashes and broken, and the meat baked with all its juices was greedily devoured.

"It tastes like a rabbit stuffed with peppermint," said George, "and uncommon nice it is. Now I am another man."

"So am I; Jacky for ever!"

"Now, Jem, I have dined: your story, if you please. Why are you here? for you are a good fellow, but you haven't got gumption enough to say to yourself, 'These two will get lost in the bush; I'll take Jacky and pull them out.'"

"You are right, captain; that wasn't the way at all; and since your belly is full and your courage up, you will be able to enjoy my story better than you could afore."

"Yes, so let us have it;" and Robinson leaned back luxuriously, being filled and warmed.

"First and foremost," commenced this artful narrator,

"there is a chap prowling in this wood at the present time with a double-barrelled gun to blow out your brains, captain."

"The devil!" cried Robinson, starting to his feet.

"And yours, farmer."

"How do you know?" asked George without moving.

"That is what I am going to tell you. That Mary M'Dogherty came crying to my tent all through the snow. 'What is up?' says I; says she, 'Murder is up.' Then she told me her cousin, an Irish boy, was at Bevan's store and he heard some queer talk, and he looked through a chink in the wall and saw two rascals putting their heads together, and he soon made out they were driving a bargain to rob you two. One was to do it, the other was a-egging him on. 'I must have fifty pounds first,' says this one. 'Why?' says the other. 'Because he has been and locked my pal up that was to be in it with me.'"

"Ah!" cried Robinson. "Go on, Jem; there is a clue, anyway."

"I have got a thicker one behind. Says the other, 'Agreed! when will you have it?' 'Why, now,' says t'other. Then this one gave him a note. Pat couldn't say that it was a fifty, but no doubt it was, but he saw the man take it and put it in a little tin box and shove it in his bosom."

"That note was the price of blood," said Robinson. "Oh, the black-hearted villains. Tell me who they were, that is all; tell me but who they were!"

"The boy didn't know."

"There! it is always so. The fools! they never know."

"Stop a bit, captain; there is a clue—your own word."

"Ay! and what is the clue?"

"As soon as ever the note was safe in his bosom he says, 'I sold you, blind mate; I'd have given fifty sooner than not done this job. Look here!' says he, 'I have sworn to have a life for each of these;' and, captain," said Jem, suddenly lowering his voice, "with that it seems he held up his right hand."

"Well, yes! yes! eh?"

"And there were two fingers amissing on it."

"Ah!"

"Now those two fingers are the ones you chopped off with your cutlass the night when the tent was attacked."

"Why, Tom, what is this? You never told me of this," cried George.

"And which are in my pocket."

"In your pocket!" said George, drawing away from him.

"Ay, farmer! wrapped up in silver paper, and they shall never leave my pocket till I have fitted them on the man, and seen him hung or shot with them two pickers and stealers tied round his bloodthirsty, mercenary, aass-aassinating neck; say that I said it."

George.—Jacky, show us the way out of this wood.

Kalingalùnga bowed assent, but he expressed a wish to take with him some of the ashes of the wambiloa. George helped him.

Robinson drew Jem aside. "You shouldn't have mentioned that before George; you have disgusted him properly."

"Oh, hang him! he needn't be so squeamish; why, I've had 'em salt——"

"There, there! drop it, Jem, do!"

"Captain! are you going to let them take us out of the wood before we have hunted it for that scoundrel?"

"Yes, I am. Look here, Jem, we are four and he is one, but a double-barrelled gun is an awkward enemy in a dark wood. No, Jem, we will outwit him to the last. We will clear the wood and get back to the camp. He doesn't know we have got a clue to him. He will come back without fear, and we will nail him with the fifty-pound note upon him; and then—Jack Ketch."

The whole party was now on the move, led by Kalingalùnga bearing the sacred ashes.

"What on earth is he going to do with them?"

The chief heard this query, and looking back said gravely, "He take them to 'Milmeridien,'" and the party followed Jacky, who twisted and zigzagged about the bush, till at last he brought them to a fairy spot, whose existence in that rugged wood none of them had dreamed possible. It was a long, open glade, meandering like a river between two deep, irregular fringes of the drooping acacia, and another lovely tree which I only know by its uncouth, unmelodious, scientiuncular name—the eucalyptus. This tree as well as the drooping acacia leaned over the ground with long leaves like dishevelled hair.

Kalingalùnga paused at the brink and said to his companions in a low, awe-struck voice, "Milmeridien."

N.I.L "Hallo! this looks better." Page 582.

The glade was full of graves, some of them fresh, glittering with bright red earth under the cool green acacias, others richly veiled with golden moss more or less according to their age; and in the recesses of the grove peeped smoother traces of mortality, mossy mounds a thousand years old, and others far more ancient still, now mere excrescences of green, known to be graves only by the light of that immense gradation of times and dates and epochs.

The floor of the open glade was laid out as a vast parterre, each grave a little flower-bed, round, square, oval, or rhomboid, and all round each bed flowed in fine and graceful curves little paths too narrow for a human foot. Primeval tradition had placed them there that spirits might have free passage to visit all the mighty dead. For here reposed no vulgar corpses. Here, their heads near the surface, but their feet deep in earth, sat the great hunters and warriors of every age of the race of Kalingalùnga, once a great nation, though now a failing tribe. They sat there this many a day, their weapons in their hands, ready to start up whenever the great signal should come, and hunt once more, but without fatigue, in woods boundless as the sea, and with bodily frames no longer mortal to knock and be knocked on the head *ad infinitum*. Simple and benign creed!

A cry of delight burst from the white men, and they were going to spread themselves over the garden of the dead. The savage checked them with horror.

"Nobody walked there while him alive," said he. "Now you follow me and not speak any words at all, or Kalingalùnga will leave you in the bush. Hush!"

The savage paused, that even the echo of his remonstrance might die well away before he traversed the garden. He then bowed his head down upon his breast in a set manner, and so remained quiet a few seconds. In that same attitude he started and walked slowly by the verge of the glade, keeping carefully clear of the graves, and never raising his head. About half-way he stopped and reverently scattered the ashes of the wambiloa upon three graves that lay near the edge, then forward—silent, downcast, reverential.

"*Mors omnibus est communis!*" The white men, even down to Jem, understood and sympathised with Kalingalùnga. In this garden of the dead of all ages they felt

their common humanity, and followed their black brother silent and awe-struck, melted too by the sweet and sacred sorrow of this calm scene; for here Death seemed to relax his crown, and the dead but to rest from trouble and toil, mourned by gentle, tender trees; and in truth it was a beautiful thought of those savage men to have given their dead for companions those rare and drooping acacias, that bowed themselves and loosed their hair so like fair women abandoned to sorrow over the beloved and dead, and night and morning swept with their dewy eyelashes the pillows of the brave. *Requiescant in pace!—resurgant in pacem!* For I wish them better than they wished themselves.

After Milmeridien came a thick scrub, through which Kalingalùnga tracked his way, and then aloud hurrah burst from all, for they were free—the net was broken. There were the mountains before them and the gaunt wood behind them at last. The native camp was visible two miles distant, and thither the party ran, and found food and fire in abundance. Black sentinels were set at such distances as to render a surprise impossible, and the travellers were invited to sleep and forget all their troubles. Robinson and Jem did sleep, and George would have been glad to, and tried, but was prevented by an unfortunate incident. *Les enfants terribles* found out his infirmity, viz., that nothing they could do would make him hit them. So half a dozen little rascals, potter-bellied than you can conceive, climbed up and down George, sticking in their twenty claws like squirrels, and feeling like cold slippery slugs. Thus was sleep averted, until a merciful gin, hearing the man's groans, came and cracked two or three of these little jack-pots with a waddie or club, so then George got leave to sleep; and just as he was dozing off, ting, tong, ti tong, tong, tong, came a fearful drumming of parchment. A corrobborree or native dance was beginning. No more sleep till that was over —so all hands turned out. A space was cleared in the wood, women stood on both sides with flaming boughs and threw a bright red light upon a particular portion of that space; the rest was dark as pitch. Time, midnight. When the white men came up, the dancing had not begun. Kalingalùnga was singing a preliminary war-song.

George had picked up some of the native language,

and he explained to the other that Jacky was singing about some great battle near the Wurra-Gurra River.

"The Wurra-Gurra! why, that is where we first found gold."

"Why, of course it is! and—yes! I thought so!"

"Thought what?"

"It is our battle he is describing."

"Which of 'em? We live in hot water."

"The one before Jem was our friend. What is he singing? Oh, come! that is over-doing it, Jacky! Why, Jem! he is telling them he killed you on the spot."

"I'll punch his head!"

"No! take it easy," said Robinson; "he is a poet; this is what they call poetical license."

"Lie without sense I call it, when here is the man."

"Ting tong! ting tong! tong!—
I slew him—he fell—by the Wurra-Gurra River.
I slew him!—ting tong! he fell—ting tong!
By the Wurra-Gurra River—ting ting tong!"

This line Jacky repeated at least forty times; but he evaded monotony by the following simple contrivance—

"I *slew* him; he *fell* by the Wurra-Gurra River—ting tong!
I slew him; *he* fell, by the Wurra-Gurra River,
I slew him; he fell, by the *Wurra-Gurra River;*"

with similar changes and then back again.

One of our own savages saved a great poet from monotony by similar means:* very good of him.

And now the gins took up the tune without the words, and the dance began to it. First two figures ghastly with white paint came bounding like Jacks-in-the-box out of the gloom into the red light, and danced gracefully—then one more popped out—then another at set intervals of time—then another, all painted differently—and swelled the dance by degrees; and still as the dance grew in numbers, the musicians sang and drummed louder and faster by well-planned gradations, and the motion rose in intensity, till they all warmed into the terrible savage

* The elder Sheridan, who used to teach his pupils to thresh dead Dryden out thus—

"*None* but the brave,
None but the *brave*,
None *but* the brave—deserve the fair."

corrobborree jump, legs striding wide, head turned over one shoulder, the eyes glaring with fiendish intensity in one direction, the arms both raised and grasping waddies and boomerangs—till at last they worked up to such a gallop of fierce buck-like leaps that there was a jump for each beat of the music. Now they were in four lines, and as the figures in the front line jumped to the right, each keeping his distance to a hair, the second line jumped to the left, the third to the right, and the fourth to the left.

The twinkle and beauty and symmetry of this was admirable, and strange as it may appear, not only were the savages now wrought up to frenzy at this climax of the dance, but the wonderful magnetic influence these children of Nature have learned to create and launch in the corrobborree so stirred the white men's blood, that they went half-mad too, and laughed and shouted and danced; and could hardly help flinging themselves among the mad fiends, and jumping and yelling with them; and when the jump was at its fiercest and quickest, and the great frenzy boiling over, these cunning artists brought it to a dead stop sharp upon the climax—and all was still.

In another minute they were all snoring; but George and Robinson often started in their slumbers, dreaming they saw the horrid figures—the skeletons, lizards, snakes, tartan shawls, the whitened fiends, the whole lot blazing at the eyes and mouth like white bude-lights, come bounding one after another out of the black night into the red torchlight, and then go striding and jumping and lurid and raging and bucking and prancing, and scattering battle and song and joy and rage and inspiration and stark-staring frenzy all around.

They awoke at daylight rather cold, and found piles of snow upon their blankets, and the lizards and skeletons and imps and tartan shawls deteriorated. The snow had melted on their bodies, and the colours had all run—some of them away. *Quid multa?* we all know how beauties look when the sun breaks on them after a ball.

They asked for Jacky; to their great chagrin, he was not to be found. They waited, getting crosser and crosser till nine o'clock, and then out comes my lord from the wood, walking towards them with his head down on his bosom, the picture of woe—the Milmeridien movement over again.

"There! don't let us scold him," said George. "I am sure he has lost a relation or maybe a dear friend; anyway, I hope it is not his sweetheart—poor Jacky! Well, Jacky! I *am* glad you have washed your face; now I know you again. You can't think how much better you look in your own face than painted up in that unreasonable way, like—like—like—I dono-what-all."

"Like something between a devil and a rainbow," suggested Robinson.

"But what is wrong?" asked George kindly. "I am almost afraid to ask, though!"

Encouraged by the tone of sympathy, the afflicted chief pointed to his face, sighed, and said, "Kalingalùnga paint war, and now Kalingalùnga wash 'um face and not kill anybody first, Kalingalùnga Jacky again, and show you white place in 'um hill a good deal soon."

And the amiable heathen cleared up a little at the prospect of serving George, whom he loved—aboriginally.

Jem remained with the natives upon some frivolous pretence. His real hope was to catch the ruffian whom he secretly believed to be still in the wood. "He is like enough to creep out this way," thought Jem, "and then—won't I nail him!"

In half an hour they were standing under the spot whose existence Robinson had so often doubted.

"Well, George, you painted it true; it really is a river of quartz running between those two black rocks. And that you think is the home of the gold, eh?"

"Well, I do. Look here, Tom! look at this great large heap of quartz boulders, all of different sizes; they have all rolled down here out of that river of quartz."

"Why, of course they have! Who doubts that?"

"Many is the time I have sat on that green mound where Jacky is sitting now, and eaten my bread and cheese."

"I daresay! but what has that to do with it? What are we to do? Are we to go up the rock and peck into that mass of quartz?"

"Well, I think it is worth while."

"Why, it would be like biting a piece out of the world! Look here, Master George! we can put your notion about the home of the gold to the test without all that trouble."

"As how?"

"You own all these quartz stones rolled out of yon river; if so, they are samples of it. Ten thousand quartz stones

is quite sample enough, so begin and turn them all over, examine them—break them, if you like. If we find but a speck of gold in one of them, I'll believe that quartz river is gold's home—if not, it is all humbug!"

George pulled a wry face; he found himself pinned to his own theory.

"Well," said he, "I own the sample tells us what is in the barn; so now I am vexed for bringing you here."

"Now we *are* here, give it a fair trial; let us set to and break every boulder in the thundering heap."

They went to work and picked the quartz boulders; full two hours they worked, and by this time they had made a considerable heap of broken quartz; it glittered in the sun, but it glittered white, not a speck of yellow came to light.

George was vexed. Robinson grinned; expecting nothing, he was not disappointed. Besides, he was winning an argument, and we all like to turn out prophets. Presently a little cackle from Jacky.

"I find 'um!"

"Find what?" asked Robinson without looking up.

"A good deal yellow stone," replied Jacky with at least equal composure.

"Let me see that," said George with considerable curiosity, and they both went to Jacky.

Now the fact is that this heap of quartz stones was in reality much larger than they thought, only the greater part of it had been overgrown with moss and patches of grass a few centuries of centuries ago.

Jacky, seated on what seemed a grassy mound, was in reality perched upon a part of the antique heap; his keen eye saw a little bit of yellow protruding through the moss, and he was amusing himself clipping it with his tomahawk, cutting away the moss and chipping the stone, which made the latter glitter more and yellower.

"Hollo!" cried George, "this looks better."

Robinson went on his knees without a word.

"It is all right," said he in a great flutter; "it is a nugget—and a good-sized one—a pound weight, I think. Now then, my lad, out you come," and he dug his fingers under it to jerk it out.

But the next moment he gave a screech and looked up amazed.

"Why, this is the point of the nugget; it lies the other

way, not flat, George! I can't move it! The pick! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! The pick! the pick!"

"Stand clear," shouted George, and he drove the point of the pick down close by the prize, then he pressed on the handle. "Why, Tom, it is jammed somehow."

"No, it is not jammed—it is its own weight. Why, George!"

"Then, Tom! it is a hundredweight if it is an ounce!"

"Don't be a fool," cried the other, trembling all over; "there is no such thing in nature."

The nugget now yielded slowly to the pressure, and began to come up into the world again inch by inch after so many thousand years. Of course, before it could come all out, the soil must open first, and when Robinson, glaring down, saw a square foot of earth part and gape as the nugget came majestically up, he gave another cry, and with trembling hands laid hold of the prize, and pulled and tugged and rolled it on to the clean moss—to lift it was not so easy. They fell down on their knees by the side of it like men in a dream. Such a thing had never been seen or heard of—a hundredweight of quartz and gold, and beautiful as it was great. It was like honeycomb, the cells of which had been sliced by a knife; the shining metal brimmed over in the delicate quartz cells.

They lifted it. Yes, full a hundredweight; half the mass was quartz, but four-fifths of the weight they knew must be gold. Then they jumped up and each put a foot on it, and shook hands over it.

"Oh, you beauty!" cried George, and he went on his knees and kissed it; "that is not because you are gold, but because you take me to Susan. Now, Tom, let us thank Heaven for its goodness to us, and back to camp this very day."

"Ay! but stop, we must wrap it in our wipes, or we shall never get back alive. The very honest ones would turn villains at sight of it. It is the wonder of the world."

"I see my Susan's eyes in it," cried George in rapture. "Oh, Tom! good, kind, honest Tom! shake hands over it once more!"

In the midst of all this rapture a horrible thought occurred.

"Why, it's Jacky's," said George faintly; "he found it."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" cried Tom uneasily; he added, however, "but I am afraid one-third of it is—pals share, white or black."

All their eyes now turned uneasily to the aboriginal, who lay yawning on the grass.

"Jacky give him you, George," said this worthy savage with superb indifference: he added with a yawn, "What for you dance corrobborree when 'um not dark?—den you bite yellow stone," continued this original, "den you red, den you white, den you red again, all because we pull up yellow stone—all dis a good deal dam ridiculous."

"So 'tis, Jacky," replied Robinson hastily; "don't you have anything to do with yellow stone; it would make you as great a fool as we are. Now show us the shortest cut back home through the bush."

At the native camp they fell in with Jem. The monstrous nugget was too heavy to conceal from his shrewd eye, so they showed it him. The sight of it almost knocked him down. Robinson told him where they found it, and advised Jem to go and look for another. Alas! the great nugget already made him wish one friend away. But Jem said—

"No, I will see you safe through the bush first."

CHAPTER LXXI.

All this time two persons in the gold-mine were upon thorns of expectation and doubt—brutus and Peter Crawley. George and Robinson did not return, but no more did Black Will. What had happened? Had the parties come into collision, and if so, with what result? If the friends had escaped, why had they never been heard of since? If, on the other hand, Will had come off conqueror, why had he never reappeared? At last brutus arrived at a positive conviction that Black Will had robbed and probably murdered the men, and was skulking somewhere with their gold, thereby defrauding him, his pal; however, he kept this to himself, and told Crawley that he feared Will had come to grief, so he would go well armed and see what was the matter, and whether he could help him. So he started for the bush well armed. Now his real object, I blush to say, was to murder Black Will, and rob him of the spoils of George and Robinson.

Wicked as these men of violence had been six months ago, gold and Crawley had made them worse, ay! much worse. Crawley indeed had never openly urged any of

them to so deep a crime as murder, and it is worthy of note as a psychological fact that this reptile contrived to deceive itself into thinking that it had stopped short of crime's utmost limits; to be sure it had tempted and bribed and urged men to robbery under circumstances that were almost sure to lead to murder, but still murder might not occur; meantime had it openly discountenanced that crime, and checked the natural proclivity of brutus and Black Will towards deeds of blood.

Self-deception will probably cease at the first blast of the archangel's trumpet, but what human heart will part with it till then? The circumstances under which a human being could not excuse or delude or justify himself have never yet occurred in the huge annals of crime. Prejudice apart, Crawley's moral position behind brutus and Black Will seems to bear a strong family likeness to that which Holy Writ assigns to the great enemy of man. That personage knocks out nobody's brains, cuts nobody's throat —never was guilty of such brutality since the world was—but he finds some thorough egotist, and whispers how the egotism of his passions or his interest may be gratified by the death of a fellow-creature. The egotist listens and blood flows.

brutus and Black Will had both suffered for their crimes. brutus had been nailed by Carlo, twice gibbeted, and the bridge of his nose broken once. Black Will had been mutilated and Walker nearly drowned, but "the close contriver of all harms" had kept out of harm's way. Violence had never recoiled on him who set it moving. For all that, Crawley, I must inform the reader, was not entirely prosperous. He had his little troubles too, whether warnings that he was on the wrong path, or punishments of his vices, or both, I can't say.

Thus it was. Mr. Crawley had a natural love of spirits without a stomach strong enough to deal with them. When he got away from Mr. Meadows, he indulged more and more, and for some months past he had been subject to an unpleasant phenomenon that arises now and then out of the fumes of liquor. At the festive board, even as he raised the glass to his lips, the face of Crawley would often be seen to writhe with a sort of horror, and his eyes to become fixed on unseen objects and perspiration to gather on his brow. Then such as were not in the secret would jump up and say, "What on earth is the matter?" and look fearfully round, expecting to see some horrid sight to justify that look of horror and anguish; but Crawley, his

glassy eyes still fixed, would whimper out, his teeth chattering and clipping the words, "Oh, ne-ne-never mind, it's o-o-only a trifling ap-pa-rition!" He had got to try and make light of it, because at first he used to cry out and point, and then the miners ran out and left him alone with his phantoms, and this was terrible. He dreaded solitude; he schemed against it and provided against it, and paid fellows to bear him company night and day, and at the festive board it was one thing to drink his phantoms neat, and another to dilute them with figures of flesh and blood. He much preferred the latter.

At first his supernatural visitors were of an unfavourable but not a ghastly character.

No. 1 was a judge, who used to rise through the floor and sit half in and half out of the wall, with a tremendous flow of horse-hair, a furrowed face, a vertical chasm between the temples, and a strike-me-off-the-rolls eye gleaming with diabolical fire from under a gray shaggy eyebrow.

No. 2 was a policeman, who came in through the window and stood imperturbable all in blue, with a pair of handcuffs, and a calm eye and a disagreeable absence of effort or emotion - an inevitable-looking policeman.

But as Crawley went deeper in crime and brandy, blood-boltered figures, erect corpses with the sickening signs of violence in every conceivable form, used to come and blast his sight and arrest the glass on its way to his lips, and make his songs and the boisterous attempts at mirth of his withered heart die in a quaver and a shiver of fear and despair. And at this period of our tale these horrors had made room for a phantom more horrible still to such a creature as Crawley. The air would seem to thicken into sulphureous smoke and then to clear, and then would come out clearer and clearer, more and more awful, a black figure with hoofs and horns and tail, eyes like red-hot carbuncle, teeth a *chevaux-de-frise* of white-hot iron, and an appalling grin.*

CHAPTER LXXII.

The party, consisting of Jacky, Jem, Robinson, and George, had traversed about one-half the bush, when a great heavy crow came wheeling and cackling over their heads, and

* The god Pan, coloured black by the early Christians.

then joined a number more who were now seen circling over a gum-tree some hundred yards distant.

"Let us go and see what that is," said Jem.

Jacky grinned and led the way. They had not gone very far when another great black bird rose so near their feet as to make them jump, and peering through the bushes they saw a man lying on his back. His arm was thrown in an easy, natural way round his gun, but at a second glance it was plain the man was dead. The crows had ripped his clothes to ribands with their tremendous beaks, and lacerated the flesh and picked out the eyes.

They stepped a few paces from this sight. There was no sign of violence on the body.

"Poor fellow!" said Jem. "How did he come by his end, I wonder?" And he stretched forward and peered with pity and curiosity mingled.

"Lost in the bush!" said Robinson very solemnly. And he and George exchanged a meaning look.

"What is that for?" said George angrily to Jacky—"grinning in sight of a dead body."

"White fellow stupid fellow," was all Jacky's reply.

The men now stepped up to the body to examine it, not that they had much hope of discovering who it was, but still they knew it was their duty for the sake of his kindred to try and find out.

George, overcoming a natural repugnance, examined the pockets. He found no papers. He found a knife, but no name was cut in the handle. In the man's bosom he found a small metal box, but just as he was taking it out Jem gave a hollo!

"I think I know him," cried Jem. "There is no mistaking that crop of black hair; it is my old captain, Black Will."

"You don't say so? What could he be doing here without his party?"

"Anything in the box, George?" asked Robinson.

"Nothing but a little money. Here is a sovereign—look! And here is a bank-note."

"A five-pound note?"

"Yes—no; it is more than that a good deal. It is for fifty pounds, Tom."

"What?"

"A fifty-pound note, I tell you."

"Jem!"

"Captain!"

A most expressive look was exchanged between these two, and by one impulse they both seized the stock of the gun that was in the dead man's hand. They lifted it, and yes—two fingers were wanting on the right hand.

"Come away from that fellow," cried Robinson to George; "let him lie."

George looked up in some wonder. Robinson pointed sternly to the dead hand in silence. George, by the light of the other men's faces, saw it all, and recoiled with a natural movement of repugnance as from a dead snake. There was a breathless silence, and every eye bent upon this terrible enemy lying terrible no longer at their feet.

"How did he die?" asked Robinson in a whisper.

"In the great snowstorm," replied George in a whisper.

"No," said Jem in the same tone, "he was alive yesterday. I saw his footprint after the snow was melted."

"There was snow again last night, Tom. Perhaps he went to sleep in that with his belly empty."

"Starvation and fatigue would do it without the snow, George. We brought a day's provisions out with us, George. He never thought of that, I will be bound."

"Not he," said Jem. "I'll answer for him he only thought of robbing and killing—never thought about dying himself."

"I can't believe he is dead so easy as this," said Robinson.

The feeling was natural. This man had come into the wood and had followed them, burning to work them ill, and they to work him ill. Both were utterly baffled. He had never prevailed to hurt them, nor they him. He was dead, but by no mortal hand. The immediate cause of his death was unknown, and will never be known for certain while the world lasts.

L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose!

CHAPTER LXXIII.

"Don't keep staring at it so, farmer; it is an ugly sight. You will see him in your sleep if you do that. Here is something better to look at—a letter. And there I carried it, and never once thought of it till the sight of his hand

made me feel in my pocket, and then my hand ran against it. 'Tis from Mr. Levi."

"Thank you, Jem. Tom, will you be so kind as read it me while I work?"

"Yes, give it me. Work! Why, what are we going to work at in the bush?"

"I should think you might guess," replied George quietly, while putting down his pickaxe and taking off his coat. "Well, I am astonished at both of you. You ought to know what I am going to do. Humph! Under this tree will be as good a place as any."

"Jem, as I am a sinner, he is going to bury him."

"Bury what? The nugget?"

"No, Jem—the Christian."*

"A pretty Christian," sneered Robinson.

"You know what I mean, Tom."

"I know it is not very kind of you to take all this trouble to bury my enemy," said Robinson, hurt.

"Don't ye say that," replied George, hurt in his turn. "He was as much my enemy as yours."

"No such thing! He was here after me, and has been tormenting me this twelve months. You have no enemy, a great soft spoon like you."

"Keep your temper, Tom," answered George in a mollifying tone. "Let each man act according to his lights. I *couldn't* leave a corpse to the fowls of the air."

"Gibbet a murderer, I say—don't bury him; especially when he has just been hunting our very lives."

"Tom," replied George doggedly, "death settles all accounts. I liked the man as little as you could, and it is not to say I am in love with a man because I sprinkle a little earth over his dead bones. Ugh! This is the unkindest soil to work. It is full of roots, enough to break a fellow's heart."

While George was picking and grubbing out roots and fighting with the difficult soil, Robinson opened Levi's letter viciously and read out—

"George Fielding, you have an enemy in the mine—a secret, cowardly, unscrupulous enemy, who lies in wait for your return. I have seen his face, and tremble for you. Therefore listen to my words. The old Jew, whom twice you have saved from harm and insult, is rich; his

* In Berkshire, among a certain class, this word means a "human being."

children are dead, the wife of his bosom is dead. He loves no creature now but you and Susannah; therefore run no more risks for gold, since much gold awaits you without risk. Come home. Respect the words of age and experience—come home. Delay not an hour. Oh, say not, 'I will sleep yet one more night in my tent, and then I will depart,' but ride speedily after me on the very instant. Two horses have I purchased for you and the young man your friend—two swift horses with their saddles. The voucher is inclosed. Ride speedily after me this very hour, lest evil befall you and yet more sorrow fall upon Susannah and upon . . . . . ISAAC LEVI."

The reading of this letter was followed by a thoughtful silence, broken only by the sound of George's pickaxe and the bursting roots.

"This is a very extraordinary letter. Mr. Levi knows more than he tells you, George."

"I am of your opinion."

"Why, captain," said Jem, "to go by that letter, Fielding is the marked man, and not you after all. So it is his own enemy he is digging that grave for."

"Do you think you will stop him by saying that?" asked Robinson with a shrug.

"He was my enemy, Tom, and yours too; but now he is nobody's enemy—he is dead. Will you help me lay him in the earth, or shall I do it by myself?"

"We will help," said the others a little sullenly.

They brought the body to its grave under the tall gum-tree.

"Not quite so rough, Tom, if *you* please."

"I didn't mean to be rough that I know of—there!"

They laid the dead villain gently and reverently in his grave. George took a handful of soil and scattered it over him.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," said he solemnly.

The other two looked down and sprinkled soil too, and their anger and bitterness began to soften by the side of George and over the grave.

Then Jem felt in his pocket and produced something wrapped in silver paper.

"This belongs!" said he with a horrible simplicity. "The farmer is too good for this world, but it is a good fault. There, farmer," said he, looking to George for

approbation as he dropped the little parcel into the grave.

"After all," continued Jem good-naturedly, "it would have been very hard upon a poor fellow to wake up in the next world and not have what does belong to him to make an honest living with."

The grave was filled in and a little mound made at the foot of the tree. Then George took out his knife and began to cut the smooth bark.

"What now? Oh, I see! That is a good idea, George. Read them a lesson. Say in a few words how he came here to do a deed of violence and died himself by the hand of Heaven."

"Tom," replied George, cutting away at the bark, "he is gone where he is sure to be judged, so we have no call to judge him. God Almighty can do that, I do suppose, without us putting in our word."

"Well, have it your own way. I never saw the toad so obstinate before, Jem. What is he cutting, I wonder?"

The inscription when finished ran thus—

"PLEASE DON'T CUT DOWN THIS TREE.
IT IS A TOMBSTONE.
A WHITE MAN LIES BELOW."

"Now, Tom, for England."

They set out again with alacrity, and battled with the bush about two hours more. George and Robinson carried the great nugget on a handkerchief stretched double across two sticks. Jem carried the picks. They were all in high spirits and made light of scratches and difficulties. At last, somewhat suddenly, they burst out of the thick part into the mere outskirts frequented by the miners, and there they came plump upon brutus, with a gun in his hand and pistols peeping out of his pockets, come to murder Black Will and rob him of his spoils.

They were startled and brutus astounded, for he was fully persuaded George and Robinson had ceased to exist. He was so dumfoundered that Robinson walked up to him and took the gun out of his hands without any resistance on his part. The others came round him, and Robinson demanded his pistols.

"What for?" said he.

Now at this very moment his eye fell upon that fabulous mass of gold they carried, and both his eyes opened and a sort of shiver passed over him. With ready cunning he looked another way, but it was too late. Robinson had caught that furtive glance, and a chill came over him that this villain should have seen the prize, a thing to excite cupidity to frenzy. Nothing now would have induced Robinson to leave him armed.

He replied sternly, "Because we are four to one, and we will hang you on the nearest tree if you don't give them up. And now, what are you doing here?"

"I was only looking for my pal," said brutus.

"Well, you won't want a gun and pistols to look for your pal. Which way are you going?"

"Into the bush."

"Then mizzle! That is the road."

Brutus moved gloomily away into the bush.

"There," said Robinson, "he has turned bushranger. I've disarmed him and saved some poor fellow's life and property. Cover up the nugget, George."

They went on, but presently Robinson had a thought.

"Jacky," said he, "you saw that man; should you know him again?"

"Yes."

"Jacky, that man is our enemy. Could you track him by his footsteps without ever letting him see you?"

Jacky smiled superior.

"Then follow him and see where he goes and whom he joins, and come to the mine directly and tell me."

Jacky's eyes gleamed at this intelligence. He sat down, and in a few turns of the hand painted his face war, and glided like a serpent on brutus' trail.

The rest cleared the wood, and brought the nugget safe hidden in their pocket-handkerchief to camp. They begged Jem to accept the fifty pounds, if he did not mind handling the price of blood.

Jem assured them he had no such scruples, and took it with a burst of thanks.

Then they made him promise faithfully not to mention to a soul about the monster nugget. No more he did while he was sober, but alas! some hours later, having a drop in his head, he betrayed his secret to one or two—say forty.

Robinson pitched their tent and mounted guard over the

nugget. George was observed to be in a strange flutter. He ran hither and thither. Ran to the post-office—ran to the stationer—got paper—drew up a paper—found M'Laughlan—made him sign it—went to Mr. Moore—showed him Isaac's voucher; on which Moore produced the horses, a large black horse with both bone and blood, and a good cob.

George was very much pleased with them, and asked what Levi had given for them.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds for the pair."

"Good Heavens!" cried George, "what a price! Mr. Levi was in earnest." Then he ran out and went to the tent and gave Robinson his letters. "But there were none for me, Tom," sighed George. "Never mind! I shall soon——"

Now these letters brought joy and triumph to Robinson; one contained a free pardon, the other was a polite missive from the Colonial Government in answer to the miners' petition he had sent up.

"Secretary had the honour to inform Mr. Robinson that police were on the road to the mine, and that soldiers would arrive to-morrow to form an escort, so that the miners' gold might travel in safety down to Sydney."

"Hurrah! this is good news," cried Robinson, "and what a compliment to me! Do you hear, George? an escort of soldiers coming to the camp to-morrow; they will take the nugget safe to Sydney."

"Not if we are robbed of it to-night," replied George.

At this moment in came Jacky with news of brutus. That wily man had gone but a little way in the bush when he had made a circuit, and had slipped back into another part of the mine, and Jacky had followed him first by trail, afterwards by sight, and had marked him down into a certain tent, on which he had straightway put a little red mark.

"Come back after our nugget, George. Fools we were to carry it blazing in folks' eyes."

"I daresay we can beat him."

"I am game to try. Jacky, I want to put a question to you."

While Jacky and Tom were conferring in animated whispers, George was fixing an old spur he had picked up into the heel of his boot.

"That is capital, Jacky. Well, George, we have hit upon a plan."

"And so have I."

"You?"

"Yes, me! but tell me yours first, Tom."

Robinson detailed him his scheme with all its ramifications, and a very ingenious stratagem it was. For all that, when George propounded his plan in less than six words, Robinson stared with surprise and then gave way to ludicrous admiration.

"Well," cried he, "simplicity before cunning; look at that now! Where was my head? George, this is your day—carried *nem. con.*"

"And, Tom, you can do yours all the same."

"Can I? Why, yes, to be sure I can. There, he saw that too before. Why, George, if you don't mind, you will be No. 1 and I No. 2. What makes you so sharp all of a sudden?"

"I have to think for Susan as well as us," said the poor fellow tenderly; "that is why I am sharp for once in a way. And now, Jacky, you are a great anxiety to me, and the time is so short. Come sit by me, dear Jacky, and let me try and make you understand what I have been doing for you that you may be good and happy, and comfortable in your old age, when your poor old limbs turn stiff and you can hunt no longer, in grateful return for the nugget and, more than that, for all your goodness and kindness to me in times of bitter trouble."

Then George showed Jacky how he had given Abner one-third of all his sheep and cattle, and Jacky two-thirds, and how M'Laughlan, a just man, would see the division made: "And do leave the woods, except for a hunt now and then, Jacky; you are too good for them."

Above all, George explained with homely earnestness the nature of the sheep, her time of lambing, etc., and showed Jacky how the sheep and cattle would always keep him fed and clothed if he would but use them reasonably and not kill the breeders for dinner.

And Jacky listened with glistening eyes, for George's glistened, and the sweet tones of affection and gratitude pierced through this family talk, and it is sad that we must drop the curtain on this green spot in the great camp and go among our villains.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

Robinson did not overrate the fatal power of the fabulous mass of gold, a glimpse of which he had incautiously given to greedy eyes. It drew brutus like a magnet after it. He

came all in a flutter to mephistopheles, and told him he had met the two men carrying a lump of solid gold between them so heavy that the sticks bent under it. "The sweat ran down me at the sight of it, but I managed to look another way directly."

What with the blows and kicks and bruises and defeats he had received, and with the gold mass his lawless eye had rested on, brutus was now in a state of mind terrible to think of.

Lust and hate, terrible twins, stung that dark heart to frenzy. Could he have had his will, he would have dispensed with cunning, would have gone out and fired bullets from his gun into the tent, and if his enemies came out alive, have met them hand to hand to slay or be slain. But the watchful foe had disarmed him, and he was compelled to listen to the more reynard-like ferocity of his accomplice.

"Bill," said the assassin of Carlo, "keep cool, and you shall have the swag, and yet not lose your revenge neither."

"—— you, tell me how."

"Let the bottle alone then; you are hot enough without that. Come nearer me. What I have got to say is not the sort of thing for me to bawl about: we should not be alive half an hour if it was heard to come from our lips."

The two heads came close together, and Crawley leaned over the other side of the table, and listened with senses keen as a razor.

"Suppose I show you how to make those two run out of their tent like two frightened women, and never once think about their swag?"

"Ah!"

"And fall blinded for life or dead or dying, while we walk off with the swag."

"Blind, dead, dying! give me your hand. How? how? how?"

"Hush! don't shout like that; come closer, and you, Smith."

Then a diabolical scheme hissed into the listeners' ears—a scheme at once cowardly and savage—a scheme of that terrible kind that robs courage, strength, and even skill of their natural advantages, and reduces their owners to the level of the weak and the timid—a scheme worthy of the assassin of Carlo, and the name I have given this wretch,

whose brain was so fertile and his heart so fiendish. Its effect on the hearers was great, but very different. Crawley recoiled, not violently, but like a serpent on which water had been poured; but brutus broke into a rapture of admiration, exultation, gratified hate.

"Bless you! bless you!" cried he with a violence more horrible than his curses; "you warm my heart—you *are* a pal. What a headpiece you have got! —— you, Smith, have you nothing to say? Isn't this a dodge out of the common?"

Now for the last minute or two Crawley's eyes had been fixed with a haggard expression on a distant corner of the room. He did not move them; he appeared hardly to have the power, but he answered, dropping the words down on the table anywhere, "Ye—yes! it is very inge-nious, ah!"

mephisto.—We must buy the turpentine directly; there is only one store sells it, and that shuts at nine.

brutus.—Do your hear, Smith; hand us out the blunt.

Crawley.—Oh, ugh! and his eyes seemed fascinated to that spot.

brutus (following Crawley's eye uneasily).—What is the matter?

Crawley.—Lo-o-o-k the-r-e! No! on your right. Oh, his tail is in the fire!

brutus.—Whose tail? don't be a fool!

Crawley.—And it doesn't burn! Oh, it burns blacker in the fire! Ah, ah! now the eyes have caught fire—diamonds full of hell. They blast! Ah! now the teeth have caught light—red-hot nails. The mouth is as big as the table, gaping wider, wider, wider. Ah! ah! ah!

brutus.— —— him; I won't stay in the room with such a fellow; he makes my blood run cold. Has he cut his father's throat in a church, or what?

Crawley (shrieking).—Oh, don't go; oh, my dear friends, don't leave me alone with IT! My dear friends, you sit down right upon it—that sends it away. And Crawley hid his face, and pointed wildly to whereabouts they were to sit upon the phantom.

brutus.—Come, it is gone now; was forced nearly to squash it first, though—haw! haw! haw!

Crawley.—Yes, it is gone, thank Heaven. I'll give up drinking.

brutus.—So now fork out the blunt for the turps.

Crawley.—No! I will give no money towards murder—robbery is bad enough. Where shall we all go to? And he rose and went out, muttering something about "a little brandy."

brutus.—The sneak! to fail us at the pinch. I'll wring his neck round. What is this?—five pounds.

mephisto.—Don't you see the move? He won't give it us—conscience forbids; but if we are such rogues as take it, no questions asked.

"The tarnation hypocrite," roared brutus with disgust; hypocrisy was the one vice he was innocent of—out of jail. mephistopheles stole Crawley's money left for that purpose, and went and bought a four-gallon cask of turpentine.

brutus remained and sharpened an old cutlass, the only weapon he had got left. Crawley and mephistopheles returned almost together. Crawley produced a bottle of brandy.

"Now," said he to mephistopheles, "I don't dispute your ingenuity, my friend, but suppose, while we have been talking, the men have struck their tent and gone away, nugget and all?"

The pair looked terribly blank. "What fools we were not to think of that." Crawley kept them in pain a moment or two.

"Well, they have not," said he; "I have been to look."

"Well done," cried mephistopheles.

"Well done," cried brutus, gasping for breath.

"There is their tent all right."

"How near did you go to it?"

"Near enough to hear their voices muttering."

"When does the moon rise to-night?"

"She is rising now."

"When does she go down?"

"Soon after two o'clock."

"Will you take a share of the work, Smith?"

"Heaven forbid!"

CHAPTER LXXV.

It was a gusty night. The moon had gone down. The tents gleamed indistinct in form, but white as snow. Robinson's tent stood a little apart among a number of deserted claims, some of them dry, but most of them with

three or four feet of water in them. There was, however, one large tent about twenty yards from Robinson's. A man crept on his stomach up to this tent and listened; he then joined another man who stood at some distance, and whose form seemed gigantic in the dim starlight. "All right," said the spy; "they are all fast as dormice, snoring like hogs; no fear from them."

"Go to work, then," whispered brutus; "do your part."

mephistopheles laid a deep iron dish upon the ground, and removed the bung from the turpentine cask and poured. "Confound the wind! how it wastes the stuff," cried he.

He now walked on tip-toe past Robinson's tent, and scattered the turpentine with a bold sweep, so that it fell light as rain over a considerable surface. A moment of anxiety succeeded; would their keen antagonists hear even that slight noise? No! no one stirred in the tent.

mephistopheles returned to the cask, and, emboldened by success, brought it nearer the doomed tent. Six times he walked past the windward side of the tent, and scattered the turpentine over it. It was at the other side his difficulties began.

The first time he launched the liquid, the wind took it and returned it nearly all in his face and over his clothes. Scarce a drop reached the tent.

The next time he went up closer with a beating heart, and flung it sharper. This time full two-thirds went upon the tent, and only a small quantity came back like spray. By the time the cask was emptied, the tent was saturated. Then this wretch passed the tent yet once more, and scattered a small quantity of oil to make the flame more durable and deadly.

"Now it is my turn," whispered brutus. "I thought it would never come."

What is that figure crouching and crawling about a hundred yards to windward? It is the caitiff Crawley, who, after peremptorily declining to have anything to do with this hellish act, has crept furtively after them, partly to play the spy on them, for he suspects they will lie to him about the gold, partly urged by curiosity. He could see nothing at that distance but the dark body of mephistopheles passing at intervals between him and the white tent. He shivered with cold and terror at the crime about to be done, and quivered with impatience that it was so long a-doing.

The assassins now divided their force: mephistopheles took his station to leeward of the tent; brutus to windward.

Crawley saw a sudden spark upon the ground; it was brutus striking a lucifer match against his heel. With this he lighted a piece of tow, and running along the tent he left a line of fire behind him and awaited the result, his cutlass griped in his hand and his teeth clinched.

Crawley saw that line of fire come, and then creep, and then rise, and then roar, and shoot up into a great column of fire thirty feet high, roaring and blazing and turning night into day all around. Simultaneously with this tremendous burst of fire and light, which startled Crawley by bringing him in a moment into broad daylight, he saw rise from the earth a black figure with a fiendish face.

At this awful sight the conscience-stricken wretch fell flat and tried to work into the soil like a worm. Nor did he recover any portion of his presence of mind till he heard a shrill whoop, savage and soul-chilling, but mortal; and looking up, saw Kalingalùnga go bounding down upon brutus with gigantic leaps, his tomahawk whirling.

Crawley cowered like a hare and watched. brutus, surprised but not dismayed, wheeled round and faced the savage, cutlass in hand. He parried a fierce blow of the tomahawk, and with his left fist struck Kalingalùnga on the temple, and knocked him backwards half a dozen yards. The elastic savage recovered himself, and danced like a fiend round brutus in the red light of the blazing tent.

Warned by the strange blow, straight from the armpit, a blow entirely new to him, he came on with more deadly caution, eyes and teeth bude-lights, and brutus felt a chill for a moment, but it speedily turned to rage. Now as the combatants each prepared to strike again, screams suddenly issued from the other side the tent, so wild, despairing, and unnatural, as to suspend their arms for a moment. They heard, but saw nothing, only the savage heart of brutus found time to exult—his enemies were perishing. But Crawley saw as well as heard. A pillar of flame eight feet high burst out from behind the tent, and ran along the ground. From that conical flame issued those appalling shrieks—it was a man on fire. The living flame ran but a few steps, then disappeared from the earth, and the screams ceased. Apparently the fire had not only killed, but annihilated its prey, and so itself. Crawley sickened with horror, and for a moment with remorse.

But already brutus and Kalingalùnga were fighting again by the light of the burning tent. They closed, and this time blood flowed on both sides. The savage, by a skilful feint, cut brutus on the flesh of the left shoulder, but not deep, and brutus once more surprised the savage by delivering point with his cutlass, and inflicted a severe graze on the ribs.

At the sight of his enemy's blood brutus followed up and aimed a fierce blow at Kalingalùnga's head; he could not have made a more useless attack. The savage bore on his left arm a shield, so called; it was but three inches broad and two feet long, but skill and practice had made it an impenetrable defence. He received the cutlass on his shield as a matter of course, and simultaneously delivered his tomahawk on brutus' unguarded head. brutus went down under the blow, and rolled over on his face.

The crouching spectator of this terrible combat, by the decaying light of the tent, heard the hard blow, and saw the white man roll upon the ground. Then he saw the tomahawk twice lifted and twice descend upon the man's back as he lay. The next moment the savage came running from the tent at his utmost speed.

Crawley's first thought was that assistance had come to brutus; his next was a terrible one. The savage had first risen from the earth at a spot between the tent and him. Perhaps he had been watching both him and the tent. A moment of horrible uncertainty, and then Crawley yielded to his instinct and ran. A terrible whoop behind told him he was indeed to be the next victim. He ran for dear life; no one would have believed he could shamble along at the rate he did. His tent was half a mile off; he would be a dead man long ere he could reach it. He turned his yelling head as he ran to see. The fleet savage had already diminished the distance between them by half. Crawley now filled the air with despairing cries for help. A large tent was before him; he knew not whose, but certain death was behind him. He made for the tent. If he could but reach it before the death-stroke was given him! Yes, it is near! No, it is white and looks closer than it is. A whoop sounded in his ears; it seemed to ring inside his head, it was so near. He flung himself, yelling with terror, at the wall of the tent. An aperture gave way. A sharp cut, as with a whip, seemed to sting

him, and he was on his knees in the middle of the tent howling for mercy, first to the savage, who he made sure was standing over him with his tomahawk; then to a man who got him by the throat and pressed a pistol barrel, cold as an icicle, to his cheek.

"Mercy! mercy! the savage! he is killing me! murder! murder! help!"

"Who are you?" roared the man, shaking him.

"Oh, stop him! he will kill me! Shoot him! Don't shoot me! I am a respectable man. It is the savage! kill him! He is at the door—please kill him! I'll give you a hundred pounds!"

"What is to do? The critter is mad!"

"There! there! you will see a savage! Shoot him! kill him! For pity's sake kill him, and I'll tell you all! I am respectable. I'll give you a hundred pounds to kill him!"

"Why, it is Smith, that gives us all a treat at times."

"Don't I! Oh, my dear good friend, he has killed me! He came after me with his tomahawk. Have pity on a respectable man and kill him!"

The man went to the door of the tent, and sure enough there was Jacky, who had retired to some distance. The man fired at him with as little ceremony as he would at a glass bottle, and, as was to be expected, missed him; but Jacky, who had a wholesome horror of the make-thunders, ran off directly, and went to hack the last vestiges of life out of brutus.

Crawley remained on his knees howling and whimpering so piteously that the man took pity on this abject personage.

"Have a drop, Mr. Smith; you have often given me one—there! I'll strike a light."

The man struck a light and fixed a candle in a socket. He fumbled in a corner for the bottle, and was about to offer it to Crawley when he was arrested by a look of silent horror on his visitor's face.

"Why, what is wrong now?"

"Look! look! look!" cried Crawley, trembling from head to foot. "Here it comes! there is its tail! Soon its eyes and teeth will catch light! It knows the work we have been at. Ah! ah! ah!

The man looked round very uneasily. Crawley's way of pointing and glaring over one's head at some object behind one was anything but encouraging.

"What? where?"

"There! there! coming through the side of the tent. It can come through a wall!" and Crawley shook from head to foot.

"Why, that is your own shadow," said the man. "Why, what a faint-hearted one to shake at your own shadow!"

"My shadow!" cried Crawley; "Heaven forbid! Have I got a tail?" screeched Crawley reproachfully.

"That you have," said the man, "now I look at you full."

Crawley clapped his hand behind him, and to his horror he had a tail!

CHAPTER LXXVI.

Crawley, who, what with the habit of cerebral hallucination due to brandy and the present flutter of his spirits and his conscience, had for a moment or two lost all the landmarks of probability, no sooner felt his hand encounter a tail—slight in size, but stiff as a pug's, and straight as a pointer's—than he uttered a dismal howl, and it is said that for a single moment he really suspected premature caudation had been inflicted on him for his crimes. But such delusions are short-lived. He slewed himself round after this tail in his efforts to see it, and squinting over his shoulder he did see it; and a warm liquid which he now felt stealing down his legs and turning cold as it went, opened his eyes still farther. It was a reed spear sticking in his person—sticking tight. Jacky, who had never got so near him as he fancied, saw him about to get into a tent, and unable to tomahawk him, did the best he could—flung a light javelin with such force and address that it pierced his coat and trousers and buried half its head in his flesh.

This spear-head, made of jagged fish-bones, had to be cut out by the simple and agreeable process of making all round it a hole larger than itself. The operation served to occupy Crawley for the remaining part of the night, and exercised his vocal powers. This was the first time he had smarted in his penetrable part—the skin—and it made him very spiteful. Away went his compunction, and at peep of day he shambled out very stiff, no longer dreading, but longing to hear which of his enemies it was he had seen wrapped in flame, shrieking,

and annihilated like the snuff of a candle. He came to the scene of action just as the sun rose.

But others were there before him. A knot of men stood round a black patch of scorched soil, round which were scattered little fragments of canvas burned to tinder, talking over a most mysterious affair of the night past.

It came out that the patrol, some of whom were present, had been ordered by Captain Robinson not to go their rounds as usual, but to watch in a tent near his own, since he expected an attack. Accustomed to keep awake on the move, but not in a recumbent posture, they had slept the sleep of infancy till suddenly awakened by the sound of a pistol. Then they had run out and had found the captain's tent in ashes, and a man lying near it sore hacked and insensible, but still breathing. They had taken him to their tent, but he had never spoken, and the affair was incomprehensible. While each was giving some wild opinion or another, a faint voice issued from the bowels of the earth, invoking aid.

Several ran to the spot, and at the bottom of an old claim, full thirty feet deep, they discovered, on looking intently down, the face of a man rising out of the clayey water. They lowered ropes and hauled him up.

"How did you come there, mate?"

He had come into the camp in the dark, and not knowing the ground, and having (to tell the truth) had a drop, he had fallen into the claim.

He was asked, with an air of suspicion, how long ago this had happened.

"More than an hour," replied the wily one.

Crawley looked at him, and being, unlike the others, acquainted with the man's features, saw, spite of the clay-cake he was enveloped in, that his whiskers were frizzled to nothing and his fiendish eyebrows gone. Then a sickening suspicion crept over him; he communicated it by a look to mephistopheles.

Acting on it, he asked, with an artful appearance of friendly interest, "But the men? the poor men that were in the tent?"

"What! the captain and his mate?"

"Yes!"

"Why, ye fool! they are half-way to Sydney by now."

"Half-way to Sydney?" and a ghastly look passed between the speaker and mephistopheles.

"Ay, lad! they rode off on Moore's two best nags at midnight."

"The captain had a belt round his waist, crammed with dust and bank-notes," cried another; "and the farmer a nugget as big as a pumpkin on the pommel of his saddle."

Four hours had not elapsed ere Crawley and mephistopheles were on the road to Sydney, but not on horseback. Crawley had no longer funds to buy two horses, and even if he had, he could not have borne the saddle after the barbarous surgery of last night—the lance-head was cut out with a cheese-knife. But he and mephistopheles joined a company of successful diggers going down with their swag. On the road they constantly passed smaller parties of unfortunate diggers, who had left the mine in despair when the weather broke and the claims filled with water; and the farther they went the more wretched was the condition of those they overtook—ragged, shoeless, hungry, foot-sore, heart-sore, poor broken pilgrims from the shrine of mammon.

Now it befell that, forty miles on this side Sydney, they fell in with seven such ragged spectres, and while they were giving these a little food, up came from the city a large, joyful party, the eagerness of hope and cupidity on their faces.

"Hollo! are they mad? going up to the diggings in the wet weather."

They were questioned.

A hundredweight of gold had been found at the diggings, and all the town was turning out to find some more such prizes; and, in fact, every mile after this they met a party, great or small, ardent, sanguine, on an almost hopeless errand.

Such is the strange and fatal no-logic of speculation. For us the rare is to turn common, and, when we have got it, be rare as ever.

mephistopheles and Crawley parted at the suburb; the former was to go to certain haunts and form a gang to seize the rich prize. Meantime Crawley would enter the town and discover where the men were lodging. If in an inn, one of the gang must go there as a well-dressed traveller and watch his opportunity; if in a lodging, other means.

Crawley found the whole city ringing with the great nugget. Crawley put eager questions and received ready

answers. He was shown the bank up to which the men had ridden in broad daylight; the one on the big horse had the nugget on his saddle; they had taken it and broken it and weighed it, and sold it in the bank parlour for three thousand eight hundred pounds.

Crawley did not like this; he had rather they had not converted it into paper. His next question was whether it was known where the men lodged.

"Known, I believe you! Why, they are more thought of than the governor. Everybody runs to get a word with them, gentle or simple. You will find them at the 'Ship' Inn."

To the "Ship" went Crawley. He dared not be too direct in his queries, so he put them in form of a statement.

"You have got some lucky ones here that found the great nugget?"

"Well, we had; but they are gone—been gone this two hours. Do you know them?"

"Yes," said Crawley, without fear, as they were gone. "Where are they gone, do you know?"

"Why, home, I suppose. You chaps make your money out of us, but you all run home to spend it."

"What, gone to England!" gasped Crawley.

"Ay! look! there is the ship just being towed out of the harbour."

Crawley shambled and tore and ran, and was just in time to see the two friends standing with beaming faces on the vessel's deck, as she glided out on her voyage home.

He sat down half stupid; mephistopheles went on collecting his gang in the suburbs.

The steamer cast off, and came wheeling back; the ship spread her huge white plumage and went proudly off to sea, the blue waves breaking white under her bows. Crawley sat glaring at all this in a state of mental collapse

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THUS have I told in long and tedious strains how George Fielding went to Australia to make a thousand pounds, and how by industry, sobriety, and cattle he did not

make a thousand pounds, and how, aided with the help of a converted thief, this honest fellow did by gold-digging, industry, and sobriety, make several thousand pounds, and take them safe away home, spite of many wicked devices and wicked men.

Thus have I told how Mr. Meadows flung out his left hand into Australia to keep George from coming back to Susan with a thousand pounds, and how, spite of one stroke of success, his left hand eventually failed, and failed completely.

But his right?

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

Joyous as the first burst of summer were the months Susan passed after the receipt of George's happy letter. Many warm feelings combined in one stream of happiness in Susan's heart. Perhaps the keenest of all was pride at George's success. Nobody could laugh at George now and insult her again there where she was most sensitive, by telling her that George was not good enough for her or any woman; and even those who set such store upon money-making would have to confess that George could do even that for love of her, as well as they could do it for love of themselves. Next to this her joy was greatest at the prospect of his speedy return.

And now she became joyfully impatient for further news, but not disappointed at his silence till two months had passed without another letter; then indeed anxiety mingled now and then with her happiness. Then it was that Meadows, slowly and hesitatingly to the last, raised his hand and struck the first direct blow at her heart. He struck in the dark—he winced for her both before and after; yet he struck. One market-day a whisper passed through Farnborough that George Fielding had met with wonderful luck—that he had made his fortune by gold, and was going to marry a young lady out in Australia. Farmer Merton brought the whisper home; Meadows was sure he would.

Meadows did not come to the house for some days. He half feared to look upon his work; to see Susan's face agonised under his blow. At last he came; he watched her by stealth. He found he might have spared his qualms. She chatted as usual in very good spirits, and

just before he went she told him the report with a smile of ineffable scorn. She was simple, unsuspicious, and every way without a shield against a Meadows; but the loyal heart by its own virtue had turned the dagger's edge.

A week after this Jefferies brought Meadows a letter; it was from Susan to George. Meadows read it, writhing; it breathed kind affection, with one or two demi-maternal cautions about his health, and to be very prudent for her sake: not a word of doubt; there was, however, a postscript, of which the following is the exact wording:—

"*P.S.*—It is all over Farnborough that you are going to be married to someone in Australia."

Two months more passed and no letter from George. These two months told upon Susan; she fretted and became restless and irritable, and cold misgivings crept over her and the anguish of suspense.

At last one day she unbosomed herself, though with hesitation, to a warm and disinterested friend; blushing all over with tearful eyes, she confessed her grief to Mr. Meadows. "Don't tell father, sir; I hide my trouble from him as well as I can, but what does it mean George not writing to me these four months and three days? Do pray tell me what does it mean?" and Susan cried so piteously that Meadows winced at his success. "Oh, Mr. Meadows, don't flatter me; tell me the truth." While he was exulting in her firmness, who demanded the truth, bitter or not, she continued, "Only don't tell me that I am forgotten!" And she looked so piteously in the oracle's face that he forgot everything in the desire to say something she would like him the better for saying. He muttered, "Perhaps he has sailed for home." He expected her to say, "And if he has, he would have written to me before sailing." But instead of this Susan gave a little cry of joy.

"Ah! how foolish I have been! Mr. Meadows, you are a friend out of a thousand; you are as wise as I am foolish. Poor George! you will never let him know I was so wicked as to doubt him." And Susan brightened with joy and hope. The heart believes so readily the thing it longs should be true. She was happy all the rest of the evening.

Meadows went away mad with her for her folly, and with himself for his feebleness of purpose, and next market-day

again the whisper went round the market that George Fielding was going to marry out there. This time a detail was sketched in; it was a lady in the town of Bathurst. Old Merton brought this home and twitted his daughter. She answered haughtily that it was a falsehood. She would stake her life on George's fidelity.

"See, Mr. Meadows, they are all against poor George; all except you. But what does it mean? If he does not write or come soon, I think I shall go mad."

"Report is a common liar; I would not believe anything till I saw it in black and white," said Meadows doggedly.

"No more I will."

Soon after this William Fielding had a talk with Susan.

"Have you heard a report about George?"

"Yes, I have heard a rumour."

"You don't believe it, I hope."

"Why should I believe it?"

"I am going to trace it up to the liar that forged it, if I can."

Susan suppressed her satisfaction at this resolution of Will Fielding's.

"Is it worth while?" asked she coldly.

"If I didn't think so I shouldn't take that much trouble, not expecting any thanks."

"Have I said anything to offend you?" asked Susan with a still more frigid tone.

The other did not trust himself to answer. But two days after he came again and told her he had written a letter to George, telling him what reports were about, and begging for an answer, whether or not there was any truth in them. A gleam of satisfaction from Susan's eyes, but not a word. This man, who had once been George's rival at heart, was the last to whom she would openly acknowledge her doubts. Then Will went on to tell her that he had traced the rumour from one to another up to a stranger whose name nobody knew, "but I daresay Mr. Meadows has a notion."

"No!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; he would have told me if he had."

William gave a snort of incredulity, and hinted that probably Mr. Meadows himself was at the bottom of the scandal.

Now Meadows' artful conduct had fortified Susan against such a suspicion, and being by nature a warm-hearted

friend, she fired up for him, as she would have for Mr. Eden or even for poor Will, in his absence. She did it, too, in the most womanish way. She did not tell the young man that she had consulted Mr. Meadows, and that he had constantly discredited the report, and set her against believing it. Had she done this, she would have staggered the simple-minded Will. But no; she said to herself, "He has attacked a good friend of mine; I won't satisfy him so far as to give him reasons," so she merely snubbed him.

"Oh, I know you are set against poor Mr. Meadows; he is a good friend of ours, of my father and me, and of George too."

"I wish you may not have to alter your mind," sneered William.

"I will not without a reason."

"I will give you a reason: do you remember that day——"

"When you insulted him in his own house, and me into the bargain, Will?"

"Not you, Susan, leastways I hope not, but him I did, and am just as like to do it again. Well, when you were gone I took a thought and I said, 'Appearances deceive the wisest; I may be mistaken.'"

"He! he!"

"I don't know what you are laughing at; and then, says I, 'It is his own house after all,' so I said, 'If I am wrong, and you don't mean to undermine my brother, take my hand,' and I gave it him."

"And he refused it?"

"No, Susan!"

"Well, then——"

"But, Susan," said William solemnly, "his hand lay in mine like a stone."

"Really now!"

"A lump of ice would be as near the mark."

"Well, is that the reason you promised me?"

William nodded.

"William, you are a fool."

"Oh, I am a fool now!"

"You go and insult a man your superior in every respect, and the very next moment he is to give you his hand as warmly as to a friend and an equal. You really are too foolish to go about without a keeper, and if it was in any

man's power to set me against poor George altogether, you have gone the way to do it this twelvemonths past;" and Susan closed the conference abruptly.

It was William's fate to rivet Meadows' influence by every blow he aimed at it. For all that, the prudent Meadows thought it worth his while to rid himself of this honest and determined foe, and he had already taken steps. He had discovered that this last month William Fielding, returning from market, had been seen more than once to stop and chat at one Mrs. Holiday's, a retired small tradeswoman in Farnborough. Now Mrs. Holiday was an old acquaintance of Meadows', and had given him sugar-plums thirty years ago. It suited his purpose to remember all of a sudden these old sugar-plums, and that Mrs. Holiday had lately told him she wanted to get out of the town and end her days upon turf.

There was a cottage, paddock, and garden for sale within a hundred yards of "The Grove." Meadows bought them a good bargain, and offered them to the widow at a very moderate rent. The widow was charmed. "Why, we can keep a cow, Mr. Meadows."

"Well, there is grass enough."

The widow took the cottage with enthusiasm.

Mrs. Holiday had a daughter, a handsome—a downright handsome girl, and a good girl into the bargain.

Meadows had said to himself, "It is not the old woman Will Fielding goes there for. Well, she will want someone to teach her how to farm that half-acre of grass, and buy the cow and milk her. Friendly offices—chat coming and going—come in, Mr. Fielding, and taste your cow's cream! and when he has got a lass of his own, his eye won't be for ever on mine."

William's letter to George went to the post-office, and from the post-office to a little pile of intercepted letters in Meadows' desk.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

Nearly eight months had now elapsed without a letter from George. Susan could no longer deceive herself with hopes. George was either false to her or dead. She said as much to her false friend. This inspired him with an artifice as subtle as unscrupulous. A letter had been brought to

him by Jefferies, which he at once recognised as the planned letter from Crawley to another tool of his in Farnborough. This very day he set about a report that George was dead. It did not reach Susan so soon as he thought it would, for old Merton hesitated to tell her, but on the Sunday evening, with considerable reluctance and misgivings, he tried in a very clumsy way to prepare her for sad news. But her mind had long been prepared for bitter tidings. Fancy eight weary months spent in passing every possible calamity before her imagination, death as often as any.

She fixed her eyes on the old man. "Father, George is dead!"

Old Merton hung his head, and made no reply.

That was enough. Susan crept from the room pale as ashes. She tottered, but she did not fall. She reached her room and locked herself in.

CHAPTER LXXX.

Mr. Meadows did not visit Grassmere for some days; the cruel one distrusted his own firmness. When he did come, he came with a distinct purpose. He found Merton alone.

"Susan sees no one. You have heard?"

"What?"

"Her sweetheart! He is dead."

"Why, how can that be? And who says so?"

"That is the news."

"Well, it is a falsehood," said Mr. Meadows coolly.

"I wish to Heaven it might," whispered old Merton, "for she won't live long after him."

Mr. Meadows then told Merton that he had spoken with a man who had got news of George Fielding not four months old, and he was in very good health.

"Will you tell Susan this?"

"Certainly."

Susan was called down. Meadows started at the sight of her. She was pale and hollow-eyed, and in these few days seemed ten years older. She was dressed all in black. "I am a murderer!" thought he; and remorse, without one grain of honest repentance, pierced his heart.

"Speak out, John," said the father; "the girl is not a

fool. She has borne ill news, she can bear good. Can't you, Susan?"

"Yes, dear father, if it is God's will any good news should come to me." And she never took her eyes off Mr. Meadows, but belied her assumed firmness by quivering like an aspen-leaf.

"Do you know Mr. Griffin?" asked Meadows.

"Yes!" replied Susan, still trembling gently, but all over.

"He has got a letter from Sydney from a little roguish attorney called Crawley. I heard him say, with my own ears, that Crawley tells him he has just seen George Fielding in the streets of Sydney well and hearty."

"You are deceiving me out of kindness" (her eyes fixed on his).

"I am not. I wish I may die if the man is not as well as I am!"

Her eyes were never off his face, and at this moment she read for certain that it was true.

She uttered a cry of joy so keen it was painful to hear, and then she laughed and cried, and sank into a chair laughing and crying in strong hysterics, that lasted till the poor girl almost fainted from exhaustion. Her joy was more violent, and even terrible, than her grief had been. The female servants were called to assist her, and old Merton and Meadows left her in their hands, feeble, but calm and thankful. She even smiled her adieu to Meadows.

The next day Meadows called upon Griffin. "Let me look at that letter!" said he. "I want to copy a part of it."

"There has been one here before you," said Griffin.

"Who?"

"She did not give her name, but I think it must have been Miss Merton. She begged me hard to let her see the letter. I told her she might take it home with her. Poor thing! she gave me a look as if she could have eaten me."

"What else?" asked Meadows anxiously—his success had run ahead of his plot.

"She put it in her bosom."

"In her bosom?"

"Ay! and pressed her little white hands upon it as if she had got a treasure. I doubt it will be more like the asp in the Bible story, eh! sir?"

"There! I don't want your reflections," said Meadows fiercely, but his voice quavered. The myrmidon was silenced.

Susan made her escape into a field called the Kynecroft, belonging to the citizens, and there she read the letter. It was a long, tiresome one, all about matters of business which she did not understand; it was only at the last page that she caught sight of the name she longed to see. She hurried down to it, and when she got to it with beating heart it was the fate of this innocent, loving woman to read these words:—

"What luck some have! There is George Fielding of 'The Grove' farm has made his fortune at the gold, and married yesterday to one of the prettiest girls in Sydney. I met them walking in the street to-day. She would not have looked at him but for the gold."

Susan uttered a faint moan, and sank down slowly on her knees like some tender tree felled by a rude stroke; her eyes seemed to swim in a mist, she tried to read the cruel words again but could not; she put her hands before her eyes.

"He is alive!" she said; "thank God he is alive!" and at last tears forced their way through her fingers. She took her handkerchief and dried her eyes. "Why do I cry for another woman's husband?" and the hot colour of shame and of wounded pride burst even through her tears.

"I will not cry," said she proudly; "he is alive—I will not cry—he has forgotten me; from this moment I will never shed another tear for one that is alive and unworthy of a tear. I will go home." She went home, crying all the way.

And now a partial success attended the deep Meadows' policy. It was no common stroke of unscrupulous cunning to plunge her into the very depths of woe in order to take her out of them. The effects were manifold, and all tended his way.

First, she was less sorrowful than she had been before that deadly blow, for now the heart had realised a greater woe, and had the miserable comfort of the comparison; but above all, new and strong passions had risen and battled fiercely with grief—anger and wounded pride.

Susan had self-respect and pride too, perhaps a shade too much, though less small vanity than have most persons of her moderate calibre.

What! had she wept and sighed all these months for a man who did not care for her? What! had she defied sneers, and despised affectionate hints, and gloried openly in her love to be openly insulted and betrayed? What had she shut herself from the world, and put on mourning and been seen in mourning for one who was not dead, but well and happy and married to another? An agony of shame rushed over the wronged, insulted, humiliated beauty. She longed to fly from the world. She asked her father to leave Grassmere and go to some other farm a hundred miles away. She asked him suddenly, nervously, and so impetuously that the old man looked up in dismay.

"What! leave the farm where your mother lived with me, and where you were born. I should feel strange, girl, but" —and he gave a strange sigh—"mayhap I shall have to leave it whether I will or no."

Susan misunderstood him, and coloured with self-reproach. She said hastily, "No! no! Father, you shan't leave it for me. Forgive me; I am a wayward girl!"

And the strung nerves gave way, and tears gushed over the hot cheeks as she clung to her father, and tried to turn the current of her despised love and bestow it all on that selfish old noodle. A great treasure went a-begging in Grassmere farmhouse. Mr. Meadows called, but much to his chagrin Susan was never visible. "Would he excuse her? she was indisposed."

The next evening he came, he found her entertaining four or five other farmers' daughters and a couple of young men. She was playing the piano to them, and talking and laughing louder and faster than ever he had heard her in his life. He sat moody a little while and watched her uneasily, but soon took his line, and exerting his excellent social powers became the life of the party. But as he warmed, Susan froze, as much as to say, "Somebody must play the fool to amuse these triflers; if you undertake it, I need not." For all that, the very attempt of society indicated what was passing in Susan's mind, and the deep Meadows invited all present to meet at his house in two days' time.

Meadows was now living in Isaac Levi's old house. He had examined it, found it a much nicer house for him than his new one—it was like himself, full of ins and outs, and it was more in the heart of business and yet quiet; for though it stood in a row, yet it was as good as detached,

because the houses on each side were unoccupied. They belonged to Jews, probably dependants on Isaac, for they had left the town about a twelvemonth after his departure, and had never returned, though a large quantity of goods had been deposited in one of the houses.

Meadows contrived that this little party should lead to another. His game was to draw Susan into the world, and, moreover, have her seen in his company. She made no resistance, for her wounded pride said, "Don't let people know you are breaking your heart for one who does not care for you." She used to come to these parties radiant and playing her part with consummate resolution and success, and go home and spend the night in tears.

Meadows did not see the tears that followed these unusual efforts—perhaps he suspected them. Enough for him that Susan's pride and shame and indignation were set against her love, and above all against her grief, and that she was forming habits whose tendency at least was favourable to his views.

Another four months and Susan, exhausted by conflicting passions, had settled down into a pensive languor, broken by gusts of bitter grief, which became rarer and rarer. Her health recovered itself, all but its elasticity. Her pride would not let her pine away. But her heart scarcely beat at all, and perhaps it was a good thing for her that a trouble of another kind came to gently stir it. Her father, who had for some months been moody and depressed, confessed to her that he had been speculating, and was on the verge of ruin. This dreadful disclosure gave little more pain to Susan than if he had told her his head ached; but she put down her work and came and kissed him, and tried to console him.

"I must work harder, that is all, father. I am often asked to give a lesson on the pianoforte; I will do that for your sake, and don't you fret for me. What with the trifle my mother settled on me and my industry, I am above poverty, and you shall never see me repine."

In short, poor Susan took her father for a woman—adopted a line of consolation addressed to his affection instead of his selfishness. It was not for her he was afflicted, it was for himself.

It was at this conjuncture that Meadows spoke out. There was no longer anything to be gained by delay. In fact, he could not but observe that since the fatal letter he

appeared to be rather losing ground in his old character. There was nothing left him but to attack her in a new one. He removed the barrier from his patient impatience.

He found her alone one evening. He begged her to walk in the garden. She complied with an unsuspecting smile. Then he told her all he had suffered for her sake —how he had loved her this three years with all his soul— how he never thought to tell her this—how hard he had struggled against it—how he had run away from it, and after that how he had subdued it, or thought he had subdued it to esteem—and how he had been rewarded by seeing that his visits and his talk had done her some good. "But now," said he, "that you are free, I have no longer the force to hide my love; now that the man I dared not interfere with has thrown away the jewel, it is not in nature that I should not beg to be allowed to take it up and wear it in my heart."

Susan listened, first with surprise, then with confusion and pain, then with terror at the violence of the man's passion; for the long restraint removed, it overwhelmed him like a flood. Her bosom heaved with modest agitation, and soon the tears streamed down her cheeks at his picture of what he had gone through for her sake. She made shift to gasp out, "My poor friend!" but she ended almost fiercely, "Let no man ever hope for affection from me, for my heart is in the grave. Oh, that I was there too!" and she ran sobbing away from him in spite of his entreaties.

Another man, and not George, had made a confession of love to her. His voice had trembled, his heart quivered with love for her, and it was not George. So, then, another link was snapped. Others saw they had a right to love her now, and acted on it.

Meadows was at a loss, but he stayed away a week in silence and thought and thought, and then he wrote a line begging permission to visit her as usual: "I have been so long used to hide my feelings because they were unlawful, that I can surely hide them if I see they make you more unhappy than you would be without."

Susan replied that her advice to him was to avoid her as he would a pestilence. He came as usual, and told her he would take her commands but could not take her advice. He would run all risks to his own heart. He was cheerful, chatty, and never said a word of love; and this

relieved Susan, so that the evening passed pleasantly. Susan, listless and indifferent to present events, and never accustomed, like Meadows, to act upon a preconceived plan, did not even observe what Meadows had gained by this sacrifice of his topic for a single night—viz., that after declaring himself her lover he was still admitted to the house. The next visit he was not quite so forbearing, yet still forbearing; and so on by sly gradations. It was every way an unequal contest. A great man against an average woman—a man of forty against a woman of twenty-two—a man all love and selfishness against a woman all affection and unselfishness. But I think his chief ally was a firm belief on Susan's part that he was the best of men; that from first to last of this affair his conduct had been perfection; that while George was truth all his thought had been to console her grief at his absence; that he never would have spoken but for the unexpected treason of George, and then, seeing her insulted and despised, he had taken that moment to show her she was loved and honoured. Oh, what an ungrateful girl she was that she could not love such a man!

Then her father was on the same side. "John Meadows seems down-like, Susan. Do try and cheer him up a bit. I am sure he has often cheered thee."

"That he has, father."

Susan pitied Meadows. Pitying him, she forced herself at times to be gracious, and when she did he was so happy that she was alarmed at her power, and drew in.

Old Merton saw now how the land lay, and he clung to a marriage between these two as his only hope. "John Meadows will pull me through if he marries my Susan."

And so the two selfish ones had got the unselfish one between them, one pulling gently the other pushing quietly, but both without intermission. Thus days and days rolled on.

Meadows now came four times a week instead of two and courted her openly, and beamed so with happiness that she had not always the heart to rob him of this satisfaction, and he overwhelmed her with kindness and attention of every sort; and if anyone else was present, she was sure to see how much he was respected; and this man whom others courted was her slave. This soothed the pride another had wounded. One day he poured out his love to her with such passion that he

terrified her, and the next time he came she avoided him.

Her father remonstrated: "Girl, you will break that man's heart if you are so unkind to him; he could not say a word because you shunned him like. Why, your heart must be made of stone." A burst of tears was all the reply.

At last two things presented themselves to this poor girl's understanding; that for her there was no chance of earthly happiness, do what she would, and that, strangely enough, she, the wretched one, had it in her power to make two other beings happy—her father and good Mr. Meadows. Now a true woman lives to make others happy. She rarely takes the self-contained views of life men are apt to do.

It passed through Susan's mind—"If I refuse to make these happy, why do I live; what am I on the earth for at all?"

It seemed cruel to her to refuse happiness when she could bestow it without making herself two shades more miserable than she was.

Despair and unselfishness are evil counsellors in a scheming, selfish world. The life-blood had been drained out of her heart by so many cruel blows, by the long waiting, the misgivings, the deep woe when she believed George dead, the bitter grief and mortification and sense of wrong when she found he was married to another.

Many of us, male and female, treated as Susan imagined herself treated, have taken another lover out of pique. Susan did not so. She was bitterly piqued, but she did not make that use of her pique.

Despair of happiness, pity, and pure unselfishness, these stood John Meadows' friends with his unhappy dupe, and perhaps my male readers will be incredulous as well as shocked when I relate the manner in which at last this young creature, lovely as an angel, in the spring of life, loving another still, and deluding herself to think she hated and despised him, was one afternoon surprised into giving her hand to a man for whom she did not really care a button.

It was as if she had said, "Is it really true your happiness depends on me? then take me—quick—before my courage fails. Are you happy now, my poor soul?" On the other side there were the passionate pleadings of a lover; the deep, manly voice broken with supplication, the male eyes

glistening, the diabolical mixture of fraud and cunning with sincerity.

At the first symptom of yielding, the man seized her as the hawk the dove; he did not wait for a second hint. He poured out gratitude and protestations. He thanked her and blessed her, and in his manly ardour caught her to his bosom. She shut her eyes and submitted to the caress as to an executioner.

"Pray let me go to my father," she whispered.

She came to her father and told him what she had done, and kissed him, and when he kissed her in return, that rare embrace seemed to her her reward. Meadows went home on wings—he was in a whirlwind of joy and triumph.

"Aha! what will not a strong will do?" He had no fears, no misgivings. He saw she did not really like him even, but he would make her love him! Let him once get her into his house and into his arms, by degrees she should love him—ay, she should adore him! He held that a young and virtuous woman cannot resist the husband who remains a lover, unless he is a fool as well as a lover. She could resist a man, but hardly the hearth, the marriage-bed, the sacred domestic ties, and a man whose love should be always present, always ardent, yet his temper always cool and his determination to be loved unflinching.

With this conviction Meadows had committed crimes of the deepest dye to possess Susan. Villain as he was, it may be doubted whether he would have committed these felonies had he doubted for an instant her ultimate happiness. The unconquerable dog said to himself, "The day will come that I will tell her how I have risked my soul for her—how I have played the villain for her; and she shall throw her arms round my neck and bless me for committing all those crimes to make her so happy against her will." It remained to clinch the nail.

He came to Grassmere every day; and one night that the old man was telling Susan and him how badly things were going with him, he said with a cheerful laugh, "I wonder at you, father-in-law, taking on that way. Do you think Susan will let you be uncomfortable for want of a thousand pounds or two?"

Now this remark was slyly made while Susan was at the other end of the room, so that she could hear it,

but was not supposed to. He did not look at her for some time, and then her face was scarlet. The next day he said privately to old Merton, "The day Susan and I go to church together, you must let me take your engagements and do the best I can with them."

"Ah! John, you are a friend! but it will take a pretty deal to set me straight again."

"How much? Two thousand?"

"More, I am afraid, and too much——"

"Too much for me to take out of my pocket for a stranger; but not for my wife's father—not if it was ten times that."

From that hour Meadows had an ally at Grassmere working heart and soul to hasten the wedding-day.

Meadows longed for this day, for he could not hide from himself that, as a lover, he made no advances. Susan's heart was like a globe of ice; he could get no hold of it anywhere. He burned with rage when the bitter truth was forced on him that, with the topic of George Fielding he had lost those bright, animated looks of affection she used to bestow on him, and now could only command her polite attention—not always that. Once he ventured on a remonstrance—only once.

She answered coldly that she could not feign; indifferent she was to everything on earth, indifferent she always should be. But for that indifference she should never have consented to marry him. Let him pause then, and think what he was doing, or, better still, give up this folly, and not tie an icicle like her to an honest and warm heart like his.

The deep Meadows never ventured on that ground again. He feared she wanted to be off the marriage, and he determined to hurry it on. He pressed her to name the day. She would not.

"Would she let him name it?"

"No."

Her father came to Meadows' assistance. "I'll name it," said he.

"Father! no! no!"

Old Merton then made a pretence of selecting a day. Rejected one day for one reason, another for another, and pitched on a day only six weeks distant. The next day Meadows bought the licence. "I thought you would like that better than being cried in church, Susan."

Susan thanked him, and said, "Oh, yes."

That evening he had a note from her, in which "She humbly asked his pardon, but she could not marry him; he must excuse her. She trusted to his generosity to let the matter drop, and forgive a poor broken-hearted girl, who had behaved ill from weakness of judgment, not lightness of heart."

Two days after this, which remained unanswered, her father came to her in great agitation and said to her, "Have you a mind to have a man's death upon your conscience?"

"Father!"

"I have seen John Meadows, and he is going to kill himself. What sort of a letter was that to write to the poor man? Says he, 'It has come on me like a thunder-clap.' I saw a pistol on his table, and he told me he wouldn't give a button to live. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, trifling with folks' hearts so."

"I trifle with folks' hearts! Oh, what shall I do?" cried Susan.

"Think of others as well as yourself," replied the old man in a rage. "Think of me."

"Of you, dear father? Does not your Susan think of you?"

"No! What will become of me if the man kills himself? He is all I have to look to, to save me from ruin."

"What, then!" cried Susan, colouring scarlet; "it is not his life you care for; it is his means of being useful to us! Poor Mr. Meadows! He has no friend but me. I will give you a line to him." The line contained these words—"Forgive me."

Half an hour after receipt of it Meadows was at the farm. Susan was going to make some faint apology. He stopped her and said, "I know you like to make folk happy. I have got a job for you. A gentleman, a friend of mine in Cheshire, wants a bailiff. He has written to me. A word from me will do the business. Now is there anyone you would like to oblige? The place is worth five hundred a year."

Susan was grateful to him for waiving disagreeable topics. She reflected and said, "Ah! but he is no friend of yours?"

"What does that matter, if he is yours?"

"Will Fielding."

"With all my heart. Only my name must not be mentioned. You are right. He can marry on this. They would both have starved in 'The Grove.'"

Thus he made the benevolent girl taste the sweets of power. "You will be asked to do many a kind action like this when you are Mrs. Meadows." So he bribed father and daughter, each after their kind. The offer came in form from the gentleman to Will Fielding. He and Miss Holiday had already been cried in church. They were married, and went off to Cheshire.

So Meadows got rid of Will Fielding at a crisis. When it suited his strategy, he made his enemy's fortune with as little compunction as he would have ruined him. A man of iron! cold iron, hot iron, whatever iron was wanted.

Mr. and Mrs. Fielding gone off to Cheshire, and Mrs. Holiday after them on a visit of domestic instruction, Meadows publicly announced his approaching marriage with Miss Merton. The coast being clear, he clinched the last nail. From this day there were gusts of repugnance, but not a shadow of resistance on Susan's side. It was to be.

The weather was fine, and every evening this man and woman walked together; the woman, envied by all the women, the man by all the men. Yet they walked side by side like the ghosts of lovers. And since he was her betrothed, one or two iron-gray hairs in the man's head had turned white, and lines deepened in his face. The victim had unwittingly revenged herself. He had stabbed her heart again and again, and drained it. He had battered this poor heart till it had become more like leather than flesh and blood, and now he wanted to nestle in it and be warmed by it, to kill the affections and revive them at will.—No!!!!

She tried to give happiness and to avoid giving pain, but her heart of hearts was inaccessible. The town had capitulated, but the citadel was empty, yet impregnable; and there were moments when flashes of hate mingled with the steady flame of this unhappy man's love, and he was tempted to kill her and himself.

But these weaknesses passed like air, the iron purpose stood firm. This day week they were to be married. Meadows counted the days and exulted; he had faith in the magic ring. It was on this Monday evening then, they walked arm-in-arm in the field, and it so happened that

Meadows was not speaking of love, but of a scheme for making all the poor people in Grassmere comfortable, especially of keeping the rain out of their roofs, and the wind out of what they vulgarly, but not unreasonably, called their windys; and Susan's colour was rising and her eyes brightening at this, the one interesting side marriage offered—to make people happy near her and round about her, and she cast a look of gratitude upon her companion—a look that, coming from so lovely a face, might very well pass for love. While thus pleasantly employed, the pair suddenly encountered a form in a long bristling beard, who peered into their faces with a singular expression of strange and wild curiosity and anxiety, but did not stop; he was making towards Farnborough.

Susan was a little startled. "Who is that?"

"I don't know."

"He looked as if he knew us."

"A traveller I think, dearest. The folk hereabouts have not got to wear those long beards yet."

"Why did you start when he passed us?"

"Did I start, Susan?"

"Your arm twitched me."

"You must have fancied it," replied Meadows with a sickly smile; "but come, Susan, the dew is falling, you had better make towards home."

He saw her safe home, then, instead of waiting to supper as usual, got his horse out and rode to the town full gallop.

"Anyone been here for me?"

"Yes, a stranger."

"With a long beard?"

"Why, yes, he had."

"He will come again?"

"In half an hour."

"Show him into my room when he comes, and admit no one else."

Meadows was hardly seated in his study, and his candles lighted, when the servant ushered in his visitor.

"Shut both the doors, and you can go to bed. I will let Mr. Richards out.—Well?"

"Well, we have done the trick between us, eh?"

"What made you come home without orders?" asked Meadows somewhat sternly.

"Why, you know as well as me, sir; you have seen them?"

"Who?"

"George Fielding and his mate."

Meadows started. "How should I see them?"

"Sir! Why, they are come home. They gave me the slip, and got away before me. I followed them. They are here. They must be here." Crawley, not noticing Meadows' face, went on. "Sir, when I found they had slipped out of the camp on horseback, and down to Sydney, and saw them with my own eyes go out of the harbour for England, I thought I should have died on the spot. I thought I should never have the courage to face you, but when I met you arm-in-arm, her eye smiling on you, I knew it was all right then. When did the event come off?"

"What event?"

"The marriage, sir—you and the lady. She is worth all the trouble she has given us."

"You fool!" roared Meadows, "we are not married. The wedding is to be this day week!"

Crawley started and gasped, "We are ruined, we are undone!"

"Hold your bawling," cried Meadows fiercely, "and let me think." He buried his face in his hands; when he removed them he was gloomy but self-possessed. "They are not in England, Crawley, or we should have seen them. They are on the road. You sailed faster than they—passed them at night, perhaps. They will soon be here. My own heart tells me they will be here before Monday. Well, I will beat them still. I will be married Thursday next." The iron man then turned to Crawley, and sternly demanded how he had let the man slip.

Crawley related all, and as he told his tale the tone of Meadows altered. He no longer doubted the zeal of his hireling. He laid his hand on his brow, and more than once he groaned and muttered half-articulate expressions of repugnance. At the conclusion he said moodily, "Crawley, you have served me well—too well! All the women upon earth were not worth a murder, and we have been on the brink of several. You went beyond your instructions."

"No, I did not," replied Crawley; "I have got them in my pocket. I will read them to you. See! there is no discretion allowed me. I was to bribe them to rob."

"Where do I countenance the use of deadly weapons?"

"Where is there a word against deadly weapons?" asked Crawley sharply. "Be just to me, sir," he added in a more whining tone. "You know you are a man that must and will be obeyed. You sent me to Australia to do a certain thing, and you would have flung me to perdition if I had stuck at anything to do it. Well, sir, I tried skill without force—look here," and he placed a small substance like white sugar on the table.

"What is that?"

"Put that in a man's glass, he will never taste it, and in half an hour he will sleep you might take the clothes off his back. Three of us watched months and months for a chance, but it was no go; those two were teetotal, or next door to it."

"I wish I had never sent you out."

"Why," replied Crawley, "there is no harm done; no blood has been spilt except on our own side. George Fielding is coming home all right. Give him up the lady, and he will never know you were his enemy."

"What!" cried Meadows, "wade through all these crimes for nothing. Lie, and feign, and intercept letters, and rob, and all but assassinate—and fail! Wade in crime up to my middle, and then wade back again without the prize! Do you see this pistol? It has two barrels; if she and I are ever parted, it shall be this way—I'll send her to heaven with one barrel, and myself to hell with the other."

There was a dead silence. Crawley returned to their old relation, and was cowed by the natural ascendency of the greater spirit.

"You need not look like a girl at me," said Meadows; "most likely it won't come to that. It is not easy to beat me, and I shall try every move man's wit can devise—this last," said he in a voice of iron, touching the pistol as it lay on the table.

There was another pause. Then Meadows rose and said calmly, "You look tired, you shall have a bottle of my old port; and my own heart is staggered, but it is only for a moment." He struck his hand upon his breast, and walked slowly from the room; and Crawley heard his step descend to the hall, and then to the cellar, and the indomitable character of the man rang in his solid tread.

Crawley was uneasy. "Mr. Meadows is getting wildish; it frightens me to see such a man as him burst out like that. He is not to be trusted with a loaded pistol. Ah!

and I am in his secrets, deep in his secrets: great men sweep away little folk that know too much. I never saw him with a pistol before." All this passing rapidly through his head, Crawley pounced on the pistol, took off the caps, whipped out a little bottle, and poured some strong stuff into the caps that loosened the detonating powder directly; then with a steel pen he picked it all out and replaced the caps, their virtue gone, before Mr. Meadows returned with two bottles; and the confederates sat in close conclave till the gray of morning broke into the room.

The great man gave but few orders to his subordinate, for this simple reason, that the game had fallen into his own hands.

Still there was something for Crawley to do. He was to have an officer watching to arrest Will Fielding on the old judgment, should he, which was hardly to be expected, come to kick up a row and interrupt the wedding; and to-morrow he was to take out a writ against "father-in-law." Mr. Meadows played a close game. He knew that things are not to be got when they are wanted. His plan was to have everything ready that might be wanted long before it was wanted. But most of the night passed in relation of what had already taken place, and Crawley was the chief speaker, and magnified his services. He related from his own point of view all that I have told, and Meadows listened with all his soul and intelligence.

At the attack on Mr. Levi, Meadows chuckled. "The old heathen!" said he contemptuously, "I have beat him anyway."

"By the way, sir, have you seen anything of him?" asked Crawley.

"No!"

"He is not come home then?"

"Not that I know of. Have you any reason to think he has?"

"No, only he left the mine directly after they pelted him; but he would not leave the country any the more for that, and money to be made in it by handfuls."

"Now, Crawley, go and get some sleep. A cold bath for me and then on horseback. I must breakfast at Grassmere."

"Great man, sir! great man! You will beat them yet, sir. You have beat Mr. Levi. Here we are in his house,

and he driven away to lay his sly old bones at the Antipodes. Ha! ha! ha!"

The sun came in at the window, and the long conference broke up, and strange to say it broke into three. Crawley home to sleep. Meadows to Grassmere. Isaac Levi to smoke an Eastern pipe, and so meditate with more tranquil pulse how to strike with deadliest effect these two, his insolent enemies.

Siste viator—and guess that riddle.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

Isaac Levi, rescued by George Fielding, reached his tent smarting with pain and bitter insult; he sat on the floor pale and dusty, and anathematised his adversaries in the Hebrew tongue. Wrath still boiling in his heart, he drew out his letters and read them. Then grief mingled with his anger. Old Cohen, his friend and agent and coeval, was dead. Another self dead. Besides the hint that this gave him to set his house in order, a distinct consideration drew Isaac now to England. He had trusted much larger interests to old Cohen than he was at all disposed to leave in the hands of Cohen's successors, men of another generation, *progenien vitiosiorem,* he sincerely believed.

Another letter gave him some information about Meadows that added another uneasiness to those he already felt on George's account. Hence his bitter disappointment when he found George gone from the mine, the date of his return uncertain. Hence, too, the purchase of Moore's horses, and the imploring letter to George; measures that proved invaluable to that young man, whose primitive simplicity and wise humility led him not to question the advice of his elder, but obey it.

And so it was that, although the old Jew sailed home upon his own interests, yet during the voyage George Fielding's assumed a great importance, direct and incidental. Direct, because the old man was warm with gratitude to him; indirect, because he boiled over with hate of George's most dangerous enemy. And as he neared the English coast, the thought that, though he was coming to Farnborough, he could not come home,

grew bitterer and bitterer, and then that he should find his enemy and his insulter in the very house sacred by the shadows of the beloved and dead!!

Finding in Nathan a youth of no common fidelity and shrewdness, Isaac confided in him; and Nathan, proud beyond description of the confidence bestowed on him by one so honoured in his tribe, enlisted in his cause with all the ardour of youth, tempered by Jewish address.

Often they sat together on the deck, and the young Jewish brain and the old Jewish brain mingled and digested a course of conduct to meet every imaginable contingency; for the facts they at present possessed were only general and vague.

The first result of all this was, that these two crept into the town of Farnborough at three o'clock one morning; that Isaac took out a key and unlocked the house that stood next to Meadows' on the left hand; that Isaac took secret possession of the first floor, and Nathan open but not ostentatious possession of the ground-floor, with a tale skilfully concocted to excite no suspicion whatever that Isaac was in any way connected with his presence in the town. Nathan, it is to be observed, had never been in Farnborough before.

The next morning they worked. Nathan went out, locking the door after him, to execute two commissions. He was to find out what the young Cohens were doing, and how far they were likely to prove worthy of the trust reposed in their father; and what Susan Merton was doing, and whether Meadows was courting her or not. The latter part of Nathan's task was terribly easy. The young man came home late at night, locked the door, made a concerted signal, and was admitted to the senior presence. He found him smoking his Eastern pipe. Nathan with dejected air told him that he had no good news; that the Cohens not only thought themselves wiser than their father, which was permissible, but openly declared it, which he, though young, had observed to be a trait confined to very great fools.

"It is well said, my son," quoth Isaac, smoking calmly—"and the other business?"

"Oh, master!" said Nathan, "I bring still worse tidings of her. She is a true Nazarite, a creature without faith. She is betrothed to the man you hate, and whom I, for your sake, hate even to death."

They spoke in an Eastern dialect, which I am paraphrasing here and translating there according to the measure of my humble abilities. Isaac sucked his pipe very fast; this news was a double blow to his feelings.

"If she be indeed a Nazarite without faith, let her go; but judge not the simple hastily. First, let me know how far woman's frailty is to blame, how far man's guile; for not for nothing was Crawley sent out to the mine by Meadows. Let me consider," and he smoked calmly again.

After a long silence, which Nathan was too respectful to break, the old man gave him his commission for to-morrow. He was to try and discover why Susan Merton had written no letters for many months to George, and why she had betrothed herself to the foe. "But reveal nothing in return," said Isaac, "neither ask more than three questions of any one person, lest they say 'Who is this that, being a Jew, asks many questions about a Nazarite maiden, and why asks he them?'"

At night Nathan returned full of intelligence. She loved the young man Fielding. She wrote letters to him and received letters from him, until gold was found in Australia. But after this he wrote to her no more letters, wherefore her heart was troubled.

"Ah! and did she write to him?"

"Yes, but received no answer, nor any letter for many months."

"Ah!"—(puff! puff!).

"Then came a rumour that he was dead, and she mourned for him, after the manner of her people, many days. Verily, master, I am vexed for the Nazarite maiden, for her tale is sad. Then came a letter from Australia that said he is not dead, but married to a stranger. Then the maiden said, 'Behold now this twelve months he writes not to me, this then is true,' and she bowed her head, and the colour left her cheek. Then this Meadows visited her, and consoled her day by day. And there are those who confidently affirm that her father said often to her, 'Behold now I am a man stricken in years, and the man Meadows is rich;' so the maiden gave her hand to the man, but whether to please the old man her father, or out of the folly and weakness of females, thou, O Isaac, son of Shadrach, shall determine; seeing that I am young, and little versed in the ways of women, knowing this only

by universal report, that they are fair to the eye, but often bitter to the taste."

"Aha!" cried Isaac, "but I am old, O Nathan, son of Eli, and with the thorns of old age comes one good fruit, 'experience.' No letters came to him, yet she wrote many—none came to her, yet he wrote many. All this is transparent as glass—here has been fraud as well as guile."

Nathan's eye sparkled. "What is the fraud, master?"

"Nay, that I know not, but I will know!"

"But how, master?"

"By help of thine ears, or my own!"

Nathan looked puzzled. So long as Mr. Levi shut himself up a close prisoner on a first floor what could he hear for himself?

Isaac read the look and smiled. He then rose and, putting his finger to his lips, led the way to his own apartments. At the staircase-door, which even Nathan had not yet passed, he bade the young man take off his shoes; he himself was in slippers. He took Nathan into a room, the floor of which was entirely covered with mattresses. A staircase, the steps of which were covered with horse-hair, went by a tolerably easy slope and spiral movement nearly up to the cornice. Of this cornice a portion about a foot square swung back on a well-oiled hinge, and Isaac drew out from the wall with the utmost caution a piece of gutta-percha piping, to this he screwed on another piece open at the end and applied it to his ear.

Nathan comprehended it all in a moment. His master could overhear every word uttered in Meadows' study. Levi explained to him that ere he left his old house he had put a new cornice in the room he thought Meadows would sit in, a cornice so deeply ornamented that no one could see the ear he left in it, and had taken out bricks in the wall of the adjoining house and made the other arrangements they were inspecting together. Mr. Levi further explained that his object was simply to overhear and counteract every scheme Meadows should form. He added that he never intended to leave Farnborough for long. His intention had been to establish certain relations in that country, buy some land and return immediately, but the gold discovery had detained him.

"But, master," said Nathan, "suppose the man had taken his business to the other side of his house?"

"Foolish youth!" replied Isaac, "am I not on both sides of him!!!"

"Ah! What, is there another on the other?"

Isaac nodded.

Thus, while Nathan was collecting facts Isaac had been watching, "patient as a cat, keen as a lynx," at his ear-hole, and heard—nothing.

Now the next day Nathan came in hastily, long before the usual hour. "Master, another enemy is come—the man Crawley! I saw him from the window; he saw not me. What shall I do?"

"Keep the house all day; I would not have him see you. He would say, 'Aha! the old Jew is here too.'" Nathan's countenance fell; he was a prisoner now as well as his master.

The next morning, rising early to prepare their food, he was surprised to find the old man smoking his pipe down below.

"All is well, my son. My turn has come. I have had great patience, and great is the reward." He then told him, with natural exultation, the long conference he had been secretly present at between Crawley and Meadows—a conference in which the enemy had laid bare not his guilt only, but the secret crevice in his coat of mail. "She loves him not!" cried Levi with exultation. "She is his dupe! With a word I can separate them and confound him utterly."

"Oh, master!" cried the youth eagerly, "speak that word to-day, and let me be there and hear it spoken, if I have favour in your eyes?"

"Speak it to-day!" cried Levi, with a look of intense surprise at Nathan's simplicity. "Go to, foolish youth!" said he. "What, after I have waited months and months for vengeance, would you have me fritter it away for want of waiting a day or two longer? No, I will strike not the empty cup from his hand, but the full cup from his lips. Aha! you have seen the Jew insulted and despised in many lands; have patience now, and you shall see how he can give blow for blow; ay! old and feeble, and without a weapon, can strike his adversary to the heart."

Nathan's black eye flashed. "You are the master, I the scholar," said he. "All I ask is to be permitted to share the watching for your enemy's word, since I may not go abroad while it is day."

Thus the old and young lynx lay in ambush all day.

And at night the young lynx prowled, but warily, lest Crawley should see him, and every night brought home some scrap of intelligence.

To change the metaphor, it was as though while the Western spider wove his artful web round the innocent fly, the Oriental spider wove another web round *him*, the threads of which were so subtle as to be altogether invisible. Both East and West leaned with sublime faith on their respective gossamers, nor remembered that *Dieu dispose*.

CHAPTER LXXXII

Meadows rode to Grassmere to try and prevail with Susan to be married on Thursday next instead of Monday. As he rode, he revolved every argument he could think of to gain her compliance. He felt sure she was more inclined to postpone the day than to advance it, but something told him his fate hung on this: "These two men will come home on Monday, I am sure of it. Ay! Monday morning, before we can wed. I will not throw a chance away; the game is too close." Then he remembered with dismay that Susan had been irritable and snappish just before parting yester-eve—a trait she had never exhibited to him before. When he arrived, his heart almost failed him, but after some little circumlocution and excuse he revealed the favour, the great favour he was come to ask. He asked it. She granted it without the shade of a demur. He was no less surprised than delighted, but the truth is, that very irritation and snappishness of yesterday was the cause of her consenting; her conscience told her she had been unkind, and he had been too wise to snap in return. So now he benefited by the reaction and little bit of self-reproach. For do but abstain from reproaching a good girl who has been unjust or unkind to you, and ten to one if she does not make you the amende by word or deed—most likely the latter, for so she can soothe her tender conscience without grazing her equally sensitive pride. Poor Susan little knew the importance of the concession she made so easily.

Meadows galloped home triumphant. But two whole days now between him and his bliss! And that day passed and Tuesday passed. The man lived three days

and nights in a state of tension that would have killed some of us or driven us mad; but his intrepid spirit rode the billows of hope and fear like a petrel. And the day before the wedding it did seem as if his adverse fate got suddenly alarmed, and made a desperate effort and hurled against him every assailant that could be found. In the morning came his mother, and implored him ere it was too late to give up this marriage. "I have kept silence, yea, even from good words," said the aged woman, "but at last I must speak. John, she does not love you. I am a woman, and can read a woman's heart; and you fancied her long before George Fielding was false to her, if false he ever was, John."

The old woman said the whole of this last sentence with so much meaning that her son was stung to rage, and interrupted her fiercely: "I looked to find all the world against me, but not my own mother. No matter—so be it; the whole world shan't turn me, and those I don't care to fight I'll fly."

And he turned savagely on his heel and left the old woman there shocked and terrified by his vehemence. She did not stay there long. Soon the scarlet cloak and black bonnet might have been seen wending their way slowly back to the little cottage, the poor old tidy bonnet drooping lower than it was wont. Meadows came back to dinner; he had a mutton-chop in his study, for it was a busy day. While thus employed there came almost bursting into the room a man struck with remorse—Jefferies, the recreant postmaster. "Mr. Meadows, I can't carry on this game no longer, and I won't for any man living!" He then in a wild, loud, and excited way went on to say how the poor girl had come a hundred times for a letter, and looked in his face so wistfully, and once she had said, "Oh, Mr. Jefferies, do have a letter for me!" and how he saw her pale face in his dreams, and little he thought when he became Meadows' tool the length the game was to be carried.

Meadows heard him out; then simply reminded him of his theft, and assured him with an oath that if he dared to confess his villainy—"My villainy?" shrieked the astonished postmaster.

"Whose else? You have intercepted letters—not I. You have abused the public confidence—not I. So if you are such a fool and sneak as to cut your throat by

peaching on yourself, I'll cry louder than you, and I'll show you have emptied letters as well as stopped them. Go home to your wife and keep quiet, or I'll smash both you and her."

"Oh, I know you are without mercy, and I dare not open my heart while I live; but I will beat you yet, you cruel monster. I will leave a note for Miss Merton confessing all, and blow out my brains to-night in the office."

The man's manner was wild and despairing. Meadows eyed him sternly. He said with affected coolness, "Jefferies, you are not game to take your own life."

"Ain't I?" was the reply.

"At least I think not."

"To-night will show."

"I must know that before night," cried Meadows, and with the word he sprang on Jefferies and seized him in a grasp of iron, and put a pistol to his head.

"Ah! no, Mr. Meadows. Mercy! mercy!" shrieked the man in an agony of fear.

"All right!" said Meadows, coolly putting up the pistol. "You half imposed on me, and that is something for you to brag of. You won't kill yourself, Jefferies; you are not the stuff. Give over shaking like an aspen, and look and listen. You are in debt. I've bought up two drafts of yours—here they are. Come to me to-morrow—after the wedding, and I will give you them to light your pipe with."

"Oh, Mr. Meadows, that would be one load off my mind."

"You are short of cash too; come to me—after the wedding, and I'll give you fifty pounds cash."

"You are very liberal, sir. I wish it was in a better cause."

"Now go home, and don't be a sneak and a fool—till after the wedding, or I will sell the bed from under your wife's back and send you to the stone-jug. Be off."

Jefferies crept away paralysed in heart, and Meadows, standing up, called out in a rage, "Are there any more of you that hope to turn John Meadows? then come on, come a thousand strong with the devil at your back, and then I'll beat you!" And for a moment the respectable man was almost grand, a man-rock standing braving earth and heaven.

"Hist! Mr. Meadows." He turned and there was Crawley. "A word, sir. Will Fielding is in the town in such a passion."

"Come to stop the wedding?"

"He was taking a glass of ale at the 'Toad and Pickaxe,' and you might hear him all over the yard."

"What is he going to do?"

"Sir, he has bought an uncommon heavy whip; he was showing it in the yard. 'This is for John Meadows' back,' said he, 'and I will give it him before the girl he has stolen from my brother. If she takes a dog instead of a man, it shall be a beaten dog,' says he."

Meadows rang the bell. "Harness the mare to the four-wheeled chaise. You know what to do, Crawley."

"Well, I can guess."

"But first get him told that I am always at Grassmere at six o'clock."

"But you won't go there this evening, of course."

"Why not?"

"Aren't you afraid he——"

"Afraid of Will Fielding? Why, you have never looked at me. I do notice your eyes are always on the ground. Crawley, when I was eighteen, one evening (it was harvest-home, and all the folk had drunk their wit and manners out), I found a farmer's wife in a lane hemmed in by three great ignorant brutes that were for kissing her, or some nonsense, and she crying help and murder and ready to faint with fright. It was a decent woman and a neighbour, so I interfered as thus: I knocked the first fellow senseless on his back with a blow before they knew of me, and then the three were two. I fought the two, giving and taking for full ten minutes, and then I got a chance, and one went down. I put my foot on his neck and kept him down for all he could do, and over his body I fought the best man of the lot, and thrashed him so that his whole mug was like a ball of beetroot. When he was quite sick he ran one way, and t'other got up roaring and ran another, and they had to send a hurdle for No. 1. Dame Fielding gave me of her own accord what all the row was about, and more than one, and hearty ones too, I assure you, and had me in to supper and told her man; and he shook my hand, a good one."

"Why, sir, you don't mean to say the woman you fought for was Mrs. Fielding."

"But I tell you it was, and I had those two boys on my knee, two chubby toads, pulling at my curly hair! Why do I talk of these things? Oh, I remember it was to show you I am not a man that can be bullied. I am a much better man than I was at eighteen. I won't be married in a black eye if I can help it. But when I am

once married, here I stand against all comers, and if you hear them grumble or threaten, you tell them that any Sunday afternoon, when there is nothing better to be done, I'll throw my cap into the ring and fight all the Fieldings that ever were pupped, one down another come on." Then, turning quite cool and contemptuous all in a moment, he said, "These are words, and we have work on hand," and even as he spoke, he strode from the room, pattered after by Crawley.

At six o'clock Meadows and Susan were walking arm-in-arm in the garden. Presently they saw a man advancing towards them with his right hand behind him. "Why, it is Will Fielding," cried Susan, "come to thank you."

"I think not by the look of him," replied Meadows coolly.

"Susan, will you be so good as to take your hand from that man's arm. I have got a word to say to him."

Susan did more than requested, seeing at once that mischief was coming. She clung to William's right arm, and while he ground his teeth with ineffectual rage, for she was strong, as her sex are strong, for half a minute, and to throw her off he must have been much rougher with her than he chose to be, three men came behind unobserved by all but Meadows, and captured him on the old judgment. And Crawley having represented him as a violent man, they literally laid the grasp of the law on him.

"But I have got the money to pay it," remonstrated William.

"Pay it then."

"But my money is at home; give me two days. I'll write to my wife and she will send it me."

The officers with a coarse laugh told him he must come with them meantime.

Meadows whispered Susan, "I'll pay it for him to-morrow."

They took off William Fielding in Meadows' four-wheeled chaise.

"Where are they taking him, John?"

"To the county jail."

"Oh, don't let them take him there. Can you not trust him?"

"Yes."

"Then why not pay it for him?"

"But I don't carry money in my pocket, and the bank is closed."

"How unfortunate!"

"Very! but I'll send it over to-morrow early, and we will have him out."

"Oh yes, poor fellow! the very first thing in the morning."

"Yes! the first thing—after we are married."

Soon after this Meadows bade Susan affectionately farewell, and rode off to Newborough to buy his gloves and some presents for his bride. On the road he overtook William Fielding going to jail, leaned over his saddle as he cantered by, and said, "Mrs. Meadows will send the money in to free you in the morning," then on again as cool as a cucumber, and cantered into the town before sunset, put up Black Rachel at the "King's Head," made his purchases, and back to the inn. As he sat in the bar-parlour drinking a glass of ale, and chatting with the landlady, two travellers came into the passage; they did not stop in it long, for one of them knew the house and led his companion into the coffee-room. But in that moment by a flash of recognition, spite of their bronzed colour and long beards, Meadows had seen who they were—George Fielding and Thomas Robinson. Words could not paint in many pages what Meadows passed through in a few seconds. His very body was one moment cold as ice, the next burning.

The coffee-room door was open—he dragged himself into the passage, though each foot in turn seemed glued to the ground, and listened. He came back and sat down in the bar.

"Are they going to stay?" said the mistress to the waiter.

"Yes, to be called at five o'clock."

The bell rang. The waiter went and immediately returned. "Hot with," demanded the waiter, in a sharp, mechanical tone. "Here, take my keys for the lump-sugar," said the landlady, and she poured first the brandy and then the hot water into a tumbler, then went upstairs to see about the travellers' beds.

Meadows was left alone a few moments with the liquor. A sudden flash came to Meadows' eye, he put his hand hastily to his waistcoat pocket, and then his eye brightened still more. Yes, it was there; he thought he had had the curiosity to keep it by him. He drew out the white lump Crawley had left on his table that night, and flung it into the glass just as the waiter returned with the sugar.

The waiter took the brandy and water into the coffee-room. Meadows sat still as a mouse, his brain boiling and

bubbling, awestruck it what he had done, yet meditating worse.

The next time the waiter came in, "Waiter," said he, "one glass among two, that is short allowance."

"Oh, the big one is teetotal," replied the waiter.

"Mrs. White," said Meadows, "if you have got a bed for me, I'll sleep here, for my nag is tired and the night is darkish."

"Always a bed for you, Mr. Meadows," was the gracious reply.

Soon the two friends rang for bed-candles. Robinson staggered with drowsiness. Meadows eyed them from behind a newspaper.

Half an hour later Mr. Meadows went to bed too, but not to sleep.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

At seven o'clock in the morning Crawley was at Meadows' house by appointment. To his great surprise the servant told him master had not slept at home. While he was talking to her, Meadows galloped up to the door, jumped off, and almost pulled Crawley upstairs with him. "Lock the door, Crawley." Crawley obeyed, but with some reluctance, for Meadows, the iron Meadows, was ghastly and shaken as he had never been shaken before. He sank into a chair. "Perdition seize the hour I first saw her!" As for Crawley, he was paralysed by the terrible agitation of a spirit so much greater than his own.

"Crawley," said Meadows, with a sudden, unnatural calm, "when the devil buys a soul for money, how much does he give? a good lump, I hear. He values our souls high—we don't, some of us."

"Mr. Meadows, sir."

"Now count those," yelled Meadows, bursting out again, and he flung a roll of notes furiously on the ground at Crawley's feet, "count and tell me what my soul has gone for. Oh! oh!"

Crawley seized them and counted them as fast as his trembling fingers would let him. So now an eye all remorse, and another eye all greed, were bent upon the same thing.

"Why, they are all hundred-pound notes, bright as silver

from the Bank of England. Oh dear! how new and crimp they are! where do they come from, sir?"

"From Australia."

"Ah! oh! impossible! No! nothing is impossible to such a man as you. Twenty."

"They are at Newborough—slept at 'King's Head,'" whispered Meadows.

"Good Heavens! think of that. Thirty——"

"So did I."

"Ah! forty—four thousand pounds."

"The lump of stuff you left here hocussed one—it was a toss up—luck was on my side—that one carried them—slept like death—long while hunting—found them under his pillow at last."

"Well done! and we fools were always beat at it. Sixty—one—two—five—seven. Seven thousand pounds."

"Seven thousand pounds! Who would have thought it? This is a dear job to me."

"Say a dear job to them and a glorious haul to you; but you deserve it all, ah!"

"Why, you fool," cried Meadows, "do you think I am going to keep the men's money?"

"Keep it! why, of course."

"What! am I a thief? I, John Meadows, that never wronged a man of a penny. I take his sweetheart, I can't live without her; but I can live without his money. I have crimes enough on my head, but not theft; there I say halt."

"Then why, in the name of Heaven, did you take them at such a risk?" Crawley put this question roughly, for he was losing his respect for his idol.

"You are as blind as a mole, Crawley," was the disdainful answer. "Don't you see that I have made George Fielding penniless, and that now old Merton won't let him have his daughter. Why should he? He said, 'If you come back with one thousand pounds.' And don't you see that when the writ is served on old Merton he will be as strong as fire for me and against him. He can't marry her at all now. I shall soon or late, and the day I marry Susan, that same afternoon seven thousand pounds will be put in George Fielding's hand; he won't know by whom, but you and I shall know. I am a sinner, but not a villain."

Crawley gave a dissatisfied grunt. Meadows struck a lucifer match and lighted a candle. He placed the candle

in the grate—it was warm weather. "Come now," said he coolly, "burn them; then they will tell no tales."

Crawley gave a shriek like a mother whose child is falling out of the window, and threw himself on his knees, with the notes in his hand behind his back. "No! no! sir! Oh, don't think of it. Talk of crime! what are all the sins we have done together compared with this? You would not burn a wheat-rick, no, not your greatest enemy's; I know you would not, you are too good a man. This is as bad; the good money that the bountiful Heaven has given us for—for the good of man."

"Come," said Meadows sternly, "no more of this folly," and he laid his iron grasp on Crawley.

"Mercy! mercy! think of me—of your faithful servant, who has risked his life and stuck at nothing for you. How ungrateful great men are!"

"Ungrateful, Crawley! Can you look me in the face and say that?"

"Never till now, but now I can;" and Crawley rose to his feet and faced the great man: the prize he was fighting for gave him supernatural courage. "To whom do you owe them? To me. You could never have had them but for my drug. And yet you would burn them before my eyes—a fortune to poor me."

"To you?"

"Yes! What does it matter to you what becomes of them so that *he* never sees them again? but it matters all to me. Give them to me, and in twelve hours I will be in France with them. You won't miss me, sir. I have done my work. And it will be more prudent, for since I have left you I can't help drinking, and I might talk, you know, sir, I might, and let out what we should both be sorry for. Send me away to foreign countries where I can keep travelling, and make it always summer. I hate the long nights when it is dark. I see such cu-u-rious things. Pray! pray let me go and take these with me, and never trouble you again."

The words, though half nonsense, were the other half cunning, and the tones and looks were piteous. Meadows hesitated. Crawley knew too much; to get rid of him was a bait; and after all, to annihilate the thing he had been all his life accumulating went against his heart. He rang the bell. "Hide the notes, Crawley. Bring me two shirts, a razor, and a comb. Crawley, these are

the terms. That you don't go near that woman——" Crawley with a brutal phrase expressed his delight at the idea of getting rid of her for ever. "That you go at once to the railway. Station opens to-day. First train starts in an hour. Up to London, over to France this evening."

"I will, sir. Hurrah! hurrah!" Then Crawley burst into protestations of gratitude which Meadows cut short. He rang for breakfast, fed his accomplice, gave him a greatcoat for his journey, and took the precaution of going with him to the station. There he shook hands with him, and returned to the principal street and entered the bank.

Crawley kept faith; he hugged his treasure to his bosom, and sat down waiting for the train. "Luck is on our side," thought he; "if this had been open yesterday those two would have come on from Newborough."

He watched the preparations; they were decorating the locomotive with bouquets and branches. They did not start punctually, some *soi-disant* great people had not arrived. "I will have a dram," thought Crawley; he went and had three: then he came back, and as he was standing inspecting the carriages a hand was laid on his shoulder: he looked round; it was Mr. Wood, a functionary with whom he had often done business.

"Ah, Wood! how d'ye do? Going to make the first trip?"

"No, sir; I have business detains me in town."

"What! a capias, eh?" chuckled Crawley.

"Something of the sort. There is a friend of yours hard by wants to speak a word to you."

"Come along, then. Where is he?"

"This way, sir."

Crawley followed Wood to the waiting-room, and there on a bench sat Isaac Levi. Crawley stopped dead short, and would have drawn back, but Levi beckoned to a seat near him. Crawley came walking like an automaton from whose joints the oil had suddenly dried. With infinite repugnance he took the seat, not liking to refuse before several persons who saw the invitation. Mr. Wood sat on the other side of him. "What does it all mean?" thought Crawley, but his cue was to seem indifferent or flattered.

"You have shaved your beard, Mr. Crawley," said Isaac in a low tone.

"My beard! I never had one," replied Crawley in the same key.

"Yes, you had when last I saw you—in the gold mine; you set ruffians to abuse me, sir."

"Don't you believe that, Mr. Levi."

"I saw it and felt it."

The peculiarity of this situation was, that the room being full of people, both parties wished, each for his own reason, not to excite general attention, and therefore delivered scarce above a whisper the sort of matter that is generally uttered very loud and excitedly.

"It is my turn now," whispered Levi; "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

"You must look sharp then," whispered Crawley; "to-morrow, perhaps, you may not have the chance."

"I never postpone vengeance—when it is ripe."

"Don't you, sir? dear me!"

"You have seven thousand pounds about you, Mr. Crawley." Crawley started and trembled. "Stolen!" whispered Isaac in his very ear. "Give it up to the officer."

Crawley rose instinctively. A firm hand was laid on each of his arms; he sat down again. "What—what—ever money I have is trusted to me by the wealthiest and most respectable man in the cou—nty, and——"

"Stolen by him, received by you! Give it to Wood, unless you prefer a public search."

"You can't search me without a warrant."

"Here is a warrant from the mayor. Take the notes out of your left breast and give them to the officer, or we must do it by force and publicity."

"I won't without Mr. Meadows' authority. Send for Mr. Meadows if you dare."

Isaac reflected. "Well, we will take you to Mr. Meadows. Keep the money till you see him, but we must secure you. Put his coat over his hands first."

The greatcoat was put over his hands, and the next moment under the coat was heard a little sharp click.

"Let us go to the carriage," said Levi in a brisk, cheerful tone. Those present heard the friendly invitation, and saw a little string of acquaintances, three in number, break up a conversation and go and get into a fly: one carried a greatcoat and bundle before him with both hands.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

Mr. Meadows went to the bank, into the parlour, and said he must draw seven thousand pounds of cash and securities. The partners look blank.

"I knew," said Meadows, "I should cripple you. Well, I am not going to, nor let anyone else—it would not suit my book. Just hand me the securities and let me make over that sum to George Fielding and Thomas Robinson. There! now for some months to come those two men are not to know how rich they are, in fact, not till I tell them." A very ready consent to this was given by both partners; I am afraid I might say an eager consent.

"There! now I feel another man, that is off me anyway," and Meadows strode home double the man. Soon his new top-boots were on, and his new dark-blue coat with flat double-gilt buttons, and his hat broadish in the brim, and he looked the model of a British yeoman; he reached Grassmere before eleven o'clock. It was to be a very quiet wedding, but the bridesmaids, etc., were there, and Susan, all in white, pale, but very lovely. Father-in-law cracking jokes, Susan writhing under them.

"Now, then, is it to be a wedding without bells, for I hear none?"

"That it shall not," cried one of the young men; and off they ran to the church.

Meantime Meadows was the life and soul of the mirthful scene. He was in a violent excitement that passed with the rustics for gaiety natural to the occasion. They did not notice his anxious glances up the hill that led to Newborough; his eager and repeated looks at his watch, the sigh of relief when the church bells pealed out, the tremors of impatience, the struggle to appear cool as he sent one to hurry the clerk, another to tell the clergyman the bride was ready; the stamp of the foot when one of the bridesmaids took ten minutes to tie on a bonnet. He walked arm-in-arm with Susan waiting for this girl; at last she was ready. Then came one running to say that the parson was not come home yet. What it cost him not to swear at the parson with Susan on his arm and the church in sight!

While he was thus fuming inwardly, a handsome, dark-eyed youth came up and inquired which was the bride. She was pointed out to him. "A letter for you, Miss Merton."

"For me? Who from?"

She glanced at the handwriting, and Meadows looked keenly in the boy's face. "A Jew," said he to himself. "Susan, you have got your gloves on." And in a moment he took the letter from her, but quietly, and opened it as if to return it to her to read. He glanced down it, saw "Jefferies, postmaster," and at the bottom "Isaac Levi." With wonderful presence of mind he tore it in pieces. "An insult, Susan," he cried. "A mean, malignant insult to set you against me—a wife against her husband."

Ere the words were out of his mouth he seized the young Jew and whirled him like a feather into the hands of his friends. "Duck him!" cried he. And in a moment, spite of his remonstrances and attempts at explanation, Nathan was flung into the horsepond. He struggled out on the other side and stood on the bank in a stupor of rage and terror, while the bridegroom menaced him with another dose should he venture to return. "I will tell you all about it to-morrow, Susan."

"Calm yourself," replied Susan. "I know you have enemies, but why punish a messenger for the letter he only carries?"

"You are an angel, Susan. Boys, let him alone, do you hear?" *N.B.*—He had been ducked.

And now a loud hurrah was heard from behind the church. "The parson at last," cried Meadows exultingly. Susan lowered her eyes, and hated herself for the shiver that passed through her. To her the parson was the executioner.

It was not the parson. The next moment two figures came round in sight. Meadows turned away with a groan. "George Fielding!" said he. The words dropped, as it were, out of his mouth.

Susan misunderstood this. She thought he read her heart, and ascribed her repugnance to her lingering attachment to George. She was angry with herself for letting this worthy man see her want of pride. "Why do you mention that name to me? What do I care for him who has deceived me? I wish he stood at the church-door that he might see how I would look at him and pass him leaning on your faithful arm."

"Susan!" cried a well-known voice behind her. She

trembled and almost crouched ere she turned; but the moment she turned round she gave a scream that brought all the company running, and the bride forgot everything at the sight of George's handsome, honest face beaming truth and love, and threw herself into his arms. George kissed the bride.

"Oh!" cried the bridesmaids, awaking from their stupor and remembering this was her old lover. "Oh!" "Oh!!" "Oh!!!" on an ascending scale.

These exclamations brought Susan to her senses. She sprang from George as though an adder had stung her, and, red as fire, with eyes like basilisks, she turned on him at a safe distance. "How dare you embrace me? How dare you come where I am? Father, ask this man why he comes here *now* to make me expose myself, and insult the honest man who honours me with his respect. Oh, father! come to me and take me away from here."

"Susan, what on earth is this? what have I done?"

"What have you done? You are false to me! you never wrote me a letter for twelve months, and you are married to a lady in Bathurst! Oh, George!"

"If he is," cried Robinson, "he must be slyer than I give him credit for, for I have never left his side night or day, and I never saw him say three civil words to a woman."

"Mr. Robinson!"

"Yes, Mr. Robinson. Somebody has been making a fool of you, Miss Merton. Why, all his cry night and day has been 'Susan! Susan!' When we found the great nugget he kisses it, and says he, 'There, that is not because you are gold, but because you take me to Susan.'"

"Hold your tongue, Tom," said George sternly. "Who puts me on my defence? Is there any man here who has been telling her I have ever had a thought of any girl but her? If there is, let him stand out now, and say it to my face if he dares." There was a dead silence. "There is a lie without a backer, it seems;" and he looked round on all the company with his calm, superior eye. "And now, Susan, what were you doing on that man's arm?"

"Oh!"

"Miss Merton and I are to be married to-day," said Meadows, "that is why I gave her my arm."

George gasped for breath, but he controlled himself by a mighty effort. "She thought me false, and now

she knows I am true. Susan," faltered he, "I say nothing about the promises that have passed between us two, and the ring you gave. Here it is."

"He has kept my ring!"

"I was there before you, Mr. Meadows, but I won't stand upon that; I don't believe there is a man in the world loves a woman in the world better than I love Susan, but still I would not give a snap of the finger to have her if her will was towards another. So please yourself, my lass, and don't cry like that: only this must end. I won't live in doubt a moment, no, nor half a moment. Speak your pleasure and nothing else; choose between John Meadows and George Fielding."

"That is fair," cried one of the bridesmaids. The women secretly admired George. "This is a man," thought they, "won't stand our nonsense."

Susan looked up in mute astonishment. "What choice can there be? The moment I saw your face and truth still shining in it, I forgot there was a John Meadows in the world." With these words Susan cast a terrified look all round, and losing every other feeling in a paroxysm of shame, hid her burning face in her hands, and made a sudden bolt into the house and upstairs to her room, where she was followed and discovered by one of her bridesmaids tearing off her wedding clothes, and laughing and crying all in a breath.

1st Bridesmaid.—Well, Josh, what d'ye think?

2nd Bridesmaid.—Why, I think there won't be a wedding to-day.

1st Bridesmaid.—No, nor to-morrow either. Sal, put on your bonnet and lets you and I go home. I came to Meadows' wedding; mustn't stay to anybody else's.

These remarks were delivered openly, *pro bono,* and dissolved the wedding party. Four principal parties remained: Meadows, old Merton, and the two friends.

"Well, uncle, Susan has spoken her mind—now you speak yours."

"George, I have been an imprudent fool; I am on the brink of ruin. I owe more than two thousand pounds. We heard you had changed your mind, and Meadows came forward like a man and said he would——"

"Your word, uncle—your promise. I crossed the seas on the faith of it."

An upper window was gently opened, and a blushing

face listened, and the hand that they were all discussing and disposing of drew back a little curtain and clutched it convulsively.

"You did, George," said the old farmer.

"Says you, 'Bring back a thousand pounds to show me you are not a fool, and you shall have my daughter,' and she was to have your blessing. Am I right, Mr. Meadows? you were present."

"Those were the words," replied Meadows.

"Well, and have you brought back the thousand pounds?"

"I have."

"John, I must stand to my word; and I will—it is justice. Take the girl, and be as happy as you can with her; and her father in the workhouse."

"I take her, and that is as much as to say that neither her father nor anyone she respects shall go to the workhouse. How much is my share, Tom?"

"Four thousand pounds."

"No, not so much."

"Yes, it is. Jacky gaxe you his share of the great nugget, and you gave him sheep in return. Here they are, lads and lasses, seventy of them, varying from one five six nought to one six two nine, and all as crimp as a muslin gown new starched. Why, I never put this!" and he took pieces of newspaper out of his pocket-book, and looked stupidly at each as it came out.

"Why, Tom?"

"Robbed!"

"Robbed, Tom?"

"Robbed! oh! I put the book under my pillow, and there I found it this morning. Robbed! robbed! Kill me, George, I have ruined you."

"I can't speak," gasped George. "Oh, what is the meaning of this?"

"But I can speak! Don't tell me of a London thief being robbed!!! George Fielding, if you are a man at all, go and leave me and my daughter in peace. If you had come home with money to keep her, I was ready to give you Susan to my own ruin. Now it is your turn to show yourself the right stuff. My daughter has given her hand to a man who can make a lady of her, and set me on my legs again. You can only beggar us. Don't stand in the poor girl's light; for pity's sake, George, leave us in peace."

"You are right, old man; my head is confused," and George put his hand feebly to his brow. "But I seem to see it is my duty to go, and I'll go." George staggered. Robinson made towards him to support him. "There, don't make a fuss with me. There is nothing the matter with me—only my heart is dead. Let me sit on this bench and draw my breath a minute—and then—I'll go. Give me your hand, Tom. Never heed their jibes. I'd trust you with more gold than the best of them was ever worth."

Robinson began to blubber the moment George took his hand, spite of the money lost. "We worked hard for it, too, good folks, and risked our lives as well as our toil;" and George and Robinson sat hand in hand upon the bench, and turned their heads away—that it was pitiful to see.

But still the pair held one another by the hand, and George said, faltering, "I have got this left me still. Ay, I have heard say that friendship was better than love, and I daresay so it is."

As if to plead against this verdict, Susan came timidly to her lover in his sorrow, and sat on his other side, and laid her head gently on his shoulder. "What signifies money to us two?" she murmured. "Oh, I have been robbed of what was dearer than life this bitter year, and now you are down-hearted at loss of money. How foolish to grieve for such nonsense when I am so hap—hap—happy!" and again the lovely face rested light as down on George's shoulder, weeping deliciously.

"It is hard, Tom," gasped George; "it is bitter hard; but I shall find a little bit of manhood by and by to do my duty. Give me breath! only give me breath! We will go back again where we came from, Tom; only I shall have nothing to work for now. Where is William, if you please? Has he forgotten me too?"

"William is in prison for debt," said old Merton gravely.

"No, he is not," put in Meadows, "for I sent the money to let him out an hour ago."

"You sent the money to let my brother out of jail? That sounds queer to me. I suppose I ought to thank you, but I can't."

"I don't ask your thanks, young man."

"You see, George," said old Merton, "ours is a poor family, and it will be a great thing for us all to have such a man as Mr. Meadows in it, if you will only let us."

"Oh, father, you make me blush," cried Susan, beginning to get her first glimpse of his character.

"He doesn't make me blush," cried George, "but he makes me sick. This old man would make me walk out of heaven if he was in it. Come, let us go back to Australia."

"Ay, that is the best thing you can do," cried old Merton.

"If he does, I shall go with him," said Susan with sudden calmness. She added, dropping her voice, "If he thinks me worthy to go anywhere with him."

"You are worthy of better than that, and better shall be your luck;" and George sat down on the bench with one bitter sob that seemed to tear his manly heart in two.

There was a time Meadows would have melted at this sad sight, but now it enraged him. He whispered fiercely to old Merton, "Touch him on his pride; get rid of him, and your debts shall be all paid that hour: if not"—— He then turned to that heart-stricken trio, touched his hat, "Good-day, all the company," said he, and strode away with rage in his heart to set the law in motion against old Merton, and so drive matters to a point.

But before he had taken a dozen steps he was met by two men who planted themselves right before him. "You can't pass, sir."

Meadows looked at them with humorous surprise. They had hooked noses. He did not like that so well. "Why not?" said he quietly, but with a wicked look.

One of the men whistled, a man popped out of the churchyard and joined the two: he had a hooked nose. Another came through the gate from the lane; another from behind the house. The scene kept quietly filling with hooked noses, till it seemed as if the ten tribes were reassembling from the four winds.

"Are they going to pitch into me?" thought Meadows, and he felt in his pocket to see if his pistol was there.

Meantime, George and Susan and Tom rose to their feet in some astonishment.

"There is a chentleman coming to put a question or two," said the first speaker. And, in fact, an old acquaintance of ours, Mr. Williams, came riding up, and hooking his horse to the gate, came in, saying, "Oh, here you are, Mr. Meadows. There is a ridiculous charge brought against you, but I am obliged to hear it before dismissing it. Give me a seat. Oh, here is a bench. It is very hot. I am informed that two men belonging to this place have

been robbed of seven thousand pounds at the 'King's Head' —the 'King's Head' in Newborough."

"It is true, sir," cried Robinson; "but how did you know?"

"I am here to *ask* questions," was the sharp answer. "Who are you?"

"Thomas Robinson."

"Which is George Fielding?"

"I am George Fielding, sir."

"Have you been robbed?"

"We have, sir."

"Of how much?"

"Seven thousand pounds."

"Come, that tallies with the old gentleman's account. Hum! where did you sleep last night, Mr. Meadows?"

"At the 'King's Head' in Newborough, sir," replied Meadows without any visible hesitation.

"Well, that is curious; but I need not say I don't believe it is more than coincidence. Where is the old gentleman? Oh, give way there and let him come here."

Now all this was inexplicable to Meadows, but still it brought a deadly thrill of vague apprehension over him. He felt as if a huge gossamer net was closing round him. Another moment the only spider capable of spinning it stood in front of him. "I thought so," dropped from his lips as Isaac Levi and he stood once more face to face.

"I accuse that man of the theft. Nathan and I heard him tell Crawley that he had drugged the young man's liquor and stolen the notes. Then we heard Crawley beg for the notes, and after much entreaty he gave them him."

"It is true!" cried Robinson in violent agitation; "it must be true. You know what a light sleeper I am, and how often you had to shake me this morning. I was hocussed, and no mistake!"

"Silence!"

"Yes, your worship."

"Where were you, Mr. Levi, to hear all this?"

"In the east room of my house."

"And where was he?"

"In the west room of his house."

"It is impossible."

"Say not so, sir. I will show you it is true. Meantime I will explain it."

He explained his contrivance at full. Meadows hung his head; he saw how terribly the subtle Oriental had outwitted

him; yet his presence of mind never for a moment deserted him.

"Sir," said he, "I have had the misfortune to offend Mr. Levi, and he is my sworn enemy. If you really mean to go into this ridiculous affair, allow me to bring witnesses, and I will prove to you he has been threatening vengeance against me these two years—and you know a lie is not much to a Jew. Does this appear likely? I am worth sixty thousand pounds—why should I steal?"

"Why, indeed?" said Mr. Williams.

"I stole these notes to give them away—that is your story, is it?"

"Nay, you stole them to beggar your rival, whose letters to the maiden he loved you had intercepted by fraud at the post-office in Farnborough." Susan and George uttered an exclamation at the same moment. "But having stolen them, you gave them to Crawley."

"How generous!" sneered Meadows. "Well, when you find Crawley with seven thousand pounds, and he says I gave them him, Mr. Williams will take your word against mine, and not till then, I think."

"Certainly not—the most respectable man for miles round!"

"So be it," retorted Isaac coolly. "Nathan, bring Crawley." At that unexpected word Meadows looked round for a way to escape. The hooked-nosed ones hemmed him in. Crawley was brought out of the fly quaking with fear.

"Sir," said Levi, "if in that man's bosom, on the left hand side, the missing notes are not found, let me suffer scorn; but if they be found, give us justice on the evil-doer."

The constable searched Crawley amidst the intense anxiety of all present. He found a bundle of notes. There was a universal cry:

"Stop, sir!" said Robinson; "to make sure, I will describe our property—seventy notes of one hundred pounds each. Numbers one five six nought to one six two nine."

Mr. Williams examined the bundle, and at once handed them over to Robinson, who shoved them hastily into George's hands, and danced for joy.

Mr. Williams looked ruefully at Meadows, then he hesitated; then turning sharply to Crawley, he said, "Where did you get these?"

Meadows tried to catch his eye and prevail on him to say nothing; but Crawley, who had not heard Levi's

evidence, made sure of saving himself by means of Meadows' reputation.

"I had them from Mr. Meadows," he cried; "and what about it? It is not the first time he has trusted me with much larger sums than that."

"Oh, you had them from Mr. Meadows?"

"Yes, I had."

"Mr. Meadows, I am sorry to say I must commit you; but I still hope you will clear yourself elsewhere."

"I have not the least uneasiness about that, sir, thank you. You will admit me to bail, of course."

"Impossible! Wood, here is a warrant; I will sign it."

While the magistrate was signing the warrant, Meadows' head fell upon his breast; he seemed to collapse standing.

Isaac Levi eyed him scornfully. "You had no mercy on the old Jew. You took his house from him, not for your need, but for hate. So he made that house a trap and caught you in your villainy."

"Yes, you have caught me," cried Meadows, "but you will never cage me!" and in a moment his pistol was at his own temple, and he pulled the trigger—the cap failed; he pulled the other trigger, the other cap failed. He gave a yell like a wounded tiger, and stood at bay gnashing his teeth with rage and despair. Half a dozen men threw themselves upon him, and a struggle ensued that almost baffles description. He dragged those six men about up and down, some clinging to his legs, some to his body. He whirled nearly every one of them to the ground in turn; and when, by pulling at his legs they got him down, he fought like a badger on his back, seized two by the throat, and putting his feet under another, drove him into the air doubled up like a ball, and he fell on Levi and sent the old man into Mr. Williams' arms, who sat down with a Jew in his lap to the derangement of his magisterial dignity.

At last he was mastered, and his hands tied behind him with two handkerchiefs.

"Take the rascal to jail!" cried Williams in a passion.

Meadows groaned. "Ay! take me," said he, "you can't make me live there. I've lived respected all these years, and now I shall be called a felon. Take me where I may hide my head and die!" and the wretched man moved away with feeble steps, his strenght and spirit crushed now his hands were tied.

Then Crawley followed him, abusing and reviling him. "So this is the end of all your manœuvring! Oh, what a fool I was to side with such a bungler as you against Mr Levi. Here am I, an innocent man, ruined through knowing a thief—ah! you don't like that word, but what else are you but a thief?" And so he followed his late idol and heaped reproaches and insults on him, till at last Meadows turned round and cast a vague look of mute despair, as much as to say, "How am I fallen when this can trample me!"

One of the company saw this look and understood it. Yielding to an impulse, he took three steps, and laid his hand on Crawley. "Ye little snake," said he, "let the man alone!" and he sent Crawley spinning like a tee-totum; then turned on his own heel and came away, looking a little red and ashamed of what he had done. My readers shall guess which of the company this was.

Half-way to the county jail Meadows and Crawley met William Fielding coming back.

It took hours and hours to realise all the happiness that had fallen on two loving hearts. First had to pass away many a spasm of terror at the wrongs they had suffered, the danger they had escaped, the long misery they had grazed. They remained rooted to the narrow spot of ground where such great and strange events had passed in a few minutes, and their destinies had fluctuated so violently, and all ended in joy unspeakable. And everybody put questions to everybody, and all compared notes, and the hours fled while they unravelled their own strange story. And Susan and George almost worshipped Isaac Levi; and Susan kissed him and called him her father, and hung upon his neck all gratitude. And he passed his hand over her chestnut hair, and said, "Go to, foolish child," but his deep, rich voice trembled a little, and wonderful tenderness and benevolence glistened in that fiery eye.

He would now have left them, but nobody there would part with him; behoved him to stay and eat fish and pudding with them—the meat they would excuse him if he would be good and not talk about going again. And after dinner George and Tom must tell their whole story, and as they told their eventful lives, it was observed tnat the hearers were far more agitated than the narrators. The latter had been in a gold-mine—had supped so full of adventures and crimes and horrors that nothing astonished

them, and they were made sensible of the tremendous scenes they had been through by the loud ejaculation, the pallor, the excitement of their hearers. As for Susan, again and again during the men's narratives the tears streamed down her face, and once she was taken faint at George's peril, and the story had to be interrupted and water sprinkled on her, and the men in their innocence were for not going on with their part, but she peremptorily insisted, and sneered at them for being so foolish as to take any notice of her foolishness. She would have every word; and, after all, was he not there alive and well, sent back to her safe after so many perils, never, never, to leave England again!

"Oh, *giorno felice!*" A day to be imagined, or described by a pen a thousand times greater and subtler than mine, but of this be sure—it was a day such as neither to Susan nor George, nor to you nor me, nor to any man or woman upon earth, has ever come twice between the cradle and the grave.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

A MONTH of Elysium. And then one day George asked Susan plump when it would be agreeable to her to marry him.

"Marry you, George?" replied Susan, opening her eyes. "Why, never! I shall never marry anyone after—you must be well aware of that." Susan proceeded to inform George, that, though foolishness was a part of her character, selfishness was not. Recent events had destroyed an agreeable delusion under which she had imagined herself worthy to be Mrs. George Fielding; she therefore, though with some reluctance, intended to resign that situation to some wiser and better woman than she had turned out. In this agreeable resolution she persisted, varying it occasionally with little showers of tears unaccompanied by the slightest convulsion of the muscles of the face. But as I am not, like George Fielding, in love with Susan Merton, or with self-deception (another's), I spare the reader all the pretty things this young lady said and believed and did to postpone her inevitable happiness. Yes, inevitable, for this sort of thing never yet kept lovers long apart since the world was, except in a novel worse than common. I will but relate how that fine fellow, George, dried "these foolish drops" on one occasion.

"Susan," said he, "if I had found you going to be

married to another man with the roses on your cheek, I should have turned on my heel and back to Australia; but a look in your face was enough; you were miserable, and any fool could see your heart was dead against it. Look at you now, blooming like a rose, so what is the use of us two fighting against human nature? We can't be happy apart—let us come together."

"Ah! George, if I thought your happiness depended on having a foolish wife——"

"Why, you know it does," replied the inadvertent Agricola.

"That alters the case; sooner than *you* should be unhappy—I think—I——"

"Name the day, then."

In short, the bells rang a merry peal, and to reconcile Susan to her unavoidable happiness, Mr. Eden came down and gave an additional weight (in her way of viewing things) to the marriage ceremony by officiating. It must be owned that this favourable circumstance cost her a few tears too.

How so, Mr. Reade?

Marry, sir, thus:—Mr. Eden was what they call eccentric; among his other deviations from usage, he delivered the meaning of sentences in church along with the words.

This was a thunder-clap to poor Susan. She had often heard a chanting machine utter the marriage service all on one note, and heard it with a certain smile of unintelligent complacency her sex wear out of politeness; but when the man Eden told her at the altar, with simple earnestness, what a high and deep and solemn contract she was making then and there with God and man, she began to cry, and wept like April through the ceremony.

I have not quite done with this pair, but leave them a few minutes, for some words are due to other characters, and to none I think more than to this very Mr. Eden, whose zeal and wisdom brought our hero and unheroine happily together through the subtle sequence of causes I have related, the prime thread a converted thief.

Mr. Eden's strength broke down under the prodigious effort to defeat the effect of separate confinement on the bodies and souls of his prisoners. Dr. Gulson ordered him abroad. Having now, since the removal of Hawes, given the separate and silent system a long and impartial trial, his last public act was to write at the foot of his report a solemn protest against it, as an impious and mad attempt to defy God's will as written on the face of man's nature;

to crush, too, those very instincts from which rise communities, cities, laws, prisons, churches, civilisation; and to wreck souls and bodies under pretence of curing souls, not by knowledge, wisdom, patience, Christian love, or any great moral effort, but by the easy and physical expedient of turning one key on each prisoner instead of on a score.

"These," said Mr. Eden, "are the dreams of selfish, lazy, heartless dunces and reckless bigots, dwarf Robespierres, with self-deceiving hearts that dream philanthropy, fluent lips that cant philanthropy, and hands swift to shed blood—which is not blood to them—because they are mere sensual brutes, so low in intelligence, that although men are murdered and die before their eyes, they cannot see it was murder, because there was no knocking on the head or cutting of throats."

The reverend gentleman then formally washed his hands of the bloodshed and reasonshed of the separate system, and resigned his office, earnestly requesting, at the same time, that as soon as the Government should come round to his opinion, they would permit him to co-operate in any enlightened experiment where God should no longer be defied by a knot of worms as in —— Jail.

Then he went abroad; but though professedly hunting health, he visited and inspected half the principal prisons in Europe. After many months events justified his prediction: the Government started a large prison on common sense and humanity, and Mr. Lacy's interest procured Mr. Eden the place of its chaplain.

This prison was what every prison in the English provinces will be in five years' time—a well-ordered community, an epitome of the world at large, for which a prison is to prepare men, not unfit them as frenzied dunces would do; it was also a self-sustaining community, like the world. The prisoners ate prisoner-grown corn and meat, wore prisoner-made clothes and bedding, were lighted by gas made in the prison, etc., etc., etc., etc. The agricultural labourers had out-door work suited to their future destiny, and mechanical trades were zealously ransacked for the city rogues. Anti-theft reigned triumphant. No idleness, no wicked waste of sweat. The members of this community sleep in separate cells, as men do in other well-ordered communities, but they do not pine and wither and die in cells for offences committed outside the prison walls. Here, if you see a man caged like a wild beast all day, you may be sure he is there not so much for his own good, as for

that of the little community in which he has proved himself unworthy to mix *pro tem.* Foul language and contamination are checkmated here not by the lazy, selfish, cruel expedient of universal solitude, but by Argus-like surveillance. Officers, sufficient in number, listen with sharp ears and look with keen eyes. The contaminator is sure to be seized and confined till prudence, if not virtue, ties his tongue: thus he is disarmed, and the better disposed encourage one another. Compare this legitimate and necesary use of that most terrible of tortures, the cell, with the tigro-asinine use of it in seven English prisons out of nine at the present date. It is just the difference between arsenic as used by a good physician and by a poisoner. It is the difference between a razor-bladed, needle-pointed knife in the hands of a Christian, a philosopher, a skilled surgeon, and the same knife in the hands of a savage, a brute, a scoundrel, or a fanatical idiot.

Mr. Eden had returned from abroad but a fortnight when he was called on to unite George and Susan.

I have little more to add than that he was very hard worked and supremely happy in his new situation, and that I have failed to do him justice in these pages. But he shall have justice one day, when pitiless asses will find themselves more foul in the eyes of the All-pure than the thieves they crushed under four walls, and "The just shall shine forth as the sun, and they that turn* many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Thomas Robinson did not stay long at Grassmere. Things were said in the village that wounded him. Ill-repute will not stop directly ill-conduct does. He went to see Mr. Eden, sent his name in as Mr. Sinclair, was received with open arms, and gave the good man a glow of happiness such as most of us, I fear, go to the grave without feeling or earning. He presented him with a massive gold ring he had hammered out of a nugget. Mr. Eden had never worn a ring in his life, but he wore this with an innocent pride, and showed it to people, and valued it more than he would the Pitt diamond, which a French king bought of an English subject, and the price was so heavy he paid for it by instalments spread over many years.

Robinson very wisely went back to Australia, and, more wisely still, married Jenny, with whom he had corresponded ever since he left her.

* Not crush.

I have no fear he will ever break the eighth commandment again. His heart was touched long ago, and ever since then his understanding had received conviction upon conviction; for oh! the blaze of light that enters our souls when our fate puts us in his place—in her place—in their place—whom we used to strike, never realising how it hurt them. He is respected for his intelligence and good-nature; he is sober, industrious, pushing, and punctilious in business. One trait of the Bohemian remains; about every four months a restlessness comes over him; then the wise Jenny of her own accord proposes a trip. Poor Tom's eyes sparkle directly; off they go together. A foolish wife would have made him go alone. They come back, and my lord goes to his duties with fresh zest till the periodical fit comes again. No harm ever comes of it.

Servants are at a great premium, masters at a discount in the colony: hence a domestic phenomenon, which my English readers can hardly conceive, but I am told my American friends have a faint glimpse of it in the occasional deportment of their "helps" in out-of-the-way places.

Now Tom, and especially Jenny, had looked forward to reigning in their own house; it was therefore a disappointment when they found themselves snubbed and treated with hauteur, and Jenny revolted against servant after servant, who straightway abdicated and left her forlorn. At last their advertisement was answered by a male candidate for menial authority, who proved to be Mr. Miles, their late master. Tom and Jenny coloured up, and both agreed it was out of the question—they should feel too ashamed. Mr. Miles answered by offering to bet a crown he should make the best servant in the street, and, strange to say, the bargain was struck, and he did turn out a model servant. He was civil and respectful, especially in public, and never abused his situation. Comparing his conduct with his predecessors, it really appeared that a gentleman can beat snobs in various relations of life. As Tom's master and Jenny's he had never descended to servility, nor was he betrayed into arrogance now that he had risen to be their servant.

A word about Jacky. After the meal off the scented rabbit in the bush, Robinson said slyly to George, "I thought you promised Jacky a hiding—well, here he is."

"Now, Tom," replied the other, colouring up, "is it reasonable? and he has just saved our two lives; but

if you think that I won't take him to task, you are much mistaken."

George then remonstrated with the chief for spoiling Abner with his tomahawk. Jacky opened his eyes with astonishment and admiration. Here was another instance of the white fellow's wonderful power of seeing things a good way behind him. He half closed his eyes and tried in humble imitation to peer back into the past. Yes, he could just manage to see himself very indistinctly giving Abner a crack; but stop! let him see; it was impossible to be positive, but was not there also some small trifle of insolence, ingratitude, and above all bungality, on the part of this Abner? When the distance had become too great to see the whole of a transaction, why strain the eyes looking at a part? Finally, Jacky submitted that these microscopic researches cost a good deal of trouble, and on the whole his tribe were wiser than the white fellows in this, that they revelled in the present, and looked on the past as a period that never had been, and the future as one that never would be. On this George resigned the moral culture of his friend. "Soil is not altogether bad," said Agricola, "but, bless your heart, it isn't a quarter of an inch deep."

On George's departure, Jacky being under the temporary impression of his words, collected together a mixed company of blacks, and marched them to his possessions. Arrived, he harangued them on the cleverness of the white fellows, and invited them to play at Europeans.

"Behold this ingenious structure," said he in Australian; "this is called a house; its use is to protect us from the weather at night. All you have to do is to notice which way the wind blows, and go and lie down on the opposite side of the house, and there you are. Then, again, when you are cold, you will find a number of wooden articles in the house. You go in, you bring them out, and burn them and are warm." He then produced what he had always considered the *chef-d'œuvre* of the white races—a box of lucifer matches; this, too, was a present from George. "See what clever fellows they are," said he; "they carry about fire, which is fire or not fire at the fortunate possessor's will"—and he let off a lucifer. These the tribe admired, but doubted whether all those little sticks had the same marvellous property, and would become fire in the hour of need. Jacky sneered

at their incredulity, and let them all off one by one in a series of preliminary experiments; this impaired their future usefulness. In short, they settled there; one or two heads had to be broken for killing the breeders for dinner, and that practice stopped; but the pot-bellied youngsters generally celebrated the birth of a lamb by spearing it.

They slept on the lee side of the house, warmed at night by the chairs and tables, etc., which they lighted. They got on very nicely, only one fine morning, without the slightest warning, whir-r-r-r they all went off to the woods, Jacky and all, and never returned. The remaining bullocks strayed devious, and the douce M'Laughlan blandly absorbed the sheep. Hasty and imperfect as my sketch of this Jacky is, give it a place in your note-book of sketches, for in a few years the Australian savage will breathe only in these pages, and the Saxon plough will erase his very grave, his Milmeridien.

brutus lived; but the form and strength he had abused were gone—he is the shape of a note of interrogation, and by a coincidence is now an "asker," *i.e.*, he begs, receives alms, and sets on a gang of burglars with whom he is in league to rob the good Christians that show him pity.

mephistopheles came suddenly to grief. When gold was found in Victoria he crossed over to that port and robbed. One day he robbed the tent of an old man, a native of the colony, who was digging there with his son, a lad of fifteen. Now these currency lads are very sharp and determined: the youngster caught a glimpse of the retiring thief and followed him, and saw him enter a tent. He watched at the entrance, and when mephistopheles came out again, he put a pistol to the man's breast and shot him dead without a word of remonstrance, accusation, or explanation.

A few diggers ran out of their claim. "If our gold is not on him," says the youngster, "I have made a mistake."

The gold was found on the carcass, and the diggers went coolly back to their work.

The youngster went directly to the commissioner and told him what he had done. "I don't see that I am called on to interfere," replied that functionary; "he was taken in the fact; you have buried him, of course?"

"Not I. I let him lie for whoever chose to own him."

"You let him lie? What, when there is a printed order from the Government stuck over the whole mine that nobody is to leave carrion about! You go off directly and bury your

carrion, or you will get into trouble, young man." And the official's manner became harsh and threatening.

If ever a man was "shot like a dog," surely the assassin of Carlo was.

Mr. Meadows in the prison refused his food and fell into a deep depression; but the third day he revived and fell to scheming again. He sent to Mr. Levi and offered to give him a long lease of his old house if he would but be absent from the trial. This was a sore temptation to the old man. But meantime stronger measures were taken in his defence and without consulting him.

One evening that Susan and George were in the garden at Grassmere, suddenly an old woman came towards them with slow and hesitating steps. Susan fled at the sight of her; she hated the very name this old woman bore. George stood his ground, looking sheepish; the old woman stood before him trembling violently and fighting against her tears. She could not speak, but held out a letter to him. He took it; the ink was rusty, it was written twenty years ago; it was from his mother to her neighbour, Mrs. Meadows, then on a visit at Newborough, telling her how young John had fought for and protected her against a band of drunken ruffians, and how grateful she was. "And I do hope, dame, he will be as good friends with my lads when they are men as you and I have been this many a day."

George did not speak for a long time. He held the letter, and it trembled a little in his hand. He looked at the old woman standing a piteous, silent suppliant. "Mrs. Meadows," said he, scarce above a whisper, "give me this letter, if you will be so good. I have not got her handwriting except our names in the Bible."

She gave him the letter half reluctantly, and looked fearfully and inquiringly in his face. He smiled kindly, and a sort of proud curl came for a moment to his lip, and the woman read the man. This royal rustic would not have taken the letter if he had not granted the mother's unspoken prayer.

"God bless you both!" said she, and went on her way.

The assizes came, and Meadows' two plaintiffs both were absent; Robinson gone to Australia, and George forfeited his recognisances and had to pay a hundred pound for it. The defendants were freed. Then Isaac Levi said to himself, "He will not keep faith with me." But he did not know his man. Meadows had a conscience, though

an oblique one. A promise from him was sacred in his own eyes. A man came to Grassmere and left a hundred pound in a letter for George Fielding. Then he went on to Levi and gave him a parcel and a note. The parcel contained the title-deeds of the house, and the note said, "Take the house and the furniture and pay me what you consider they are worth. And, old man, I think you might take your curse off me, for I have never known a heart at rest since you laid it on me, and you see now our case is altered—you have a home now, and John Meadows has none."

Then the old man was softened, and he wrote a line in reply, and said, "Three just men shall value the house and furniture, and I will pay, etc., etc. Put now adversity to profit—repent and prosper. Isaac Levi wishes you no ill from this day, but rather good." Thus died, as mortal feelings are apt to die, an enmity its owners thought immortal.

A steam vessel glided down the Thames bound for Port Philip. On the deck were to be seen a little girl crying bitterly—this was Hannah—a stalwart, yeoman-like figure, who stood unmoved as the shores glided by—

"Omne solum forti patria,"

and an old woman, who held his arm as if she needed to feel him at the moment of leaving her native land. This old woman had hated and denounced his sins, and there was scarce a point of morality on which she thoroughly agreed with him. Yet at threescore years and ten she left her native land with two sole objects —to comfort this stout man and win him to repentance.

"He shall repent," said she to herself. "Even now his eyes are opening, his heart is softening. Three times he has said to me, 'That George Fielding is a better man than I am.' He will repent. Again he said to me, 'I have thought too little of you, and too much where it was a sin for me even to look.' He will repent —his voice is softer—he bears no malice—he blames none but himself. It is never too late to mend. He will repent, and I shall see him happy, and lay my old bones to rest contented, though not where I thought to lay them —in Grassmere Churchyard."

Ah! you do well to hold that quaint little old figure with that strong arm closer to you than you have done this many years, ay, since you were a curly-headed boy.

It is a good sign; John, on neither side of the equator shall you ever find a friend like her.

"All other love is mockery and deceit.
'Tis like the mirage of the desert, that appears
A cool refreshing water, and allures
The thirsty traveller, but flies anon
And leaves him disappointed, wondering
So fair a vision should so futile prove.
A mother's love is like unto a well
Sealed and kept secret, a deep-hidden fount
That flows when every other spring is dry." *

Peter Crawley, left to his own resources, practises at the County Courts in his old neighbourhood, and drinks with all his clients, who are of the lowest imaginable order. He complains that "he can't peck," yet continues the cause of his infirmity, living almost entirely upon cock-a-doodle broth—eggs beat up in brandy and a little water. Like Scipio, he is never less alone than when alone; with this difference, that the companions of P. C.'s solitude do not add to the pleasure of his existence. Unless somebody can make him see that it is never too late to mend, this little rogue, fool, and sot will "shut up like a knife some day" (so says a medical friend), and then it will be too late.

It is nine in the evening. A little party is collected of farmers and their wives and daughters. Mrs. George Fielding rises and says, "Now I must go home." (Remonstrance of hostess.) "George will be at home by now."

"Well, wait till he comes for you."

"Oh, he won't come, for fear of shortening my pleasure."

Susan then explains that George is so foolish that he never will go into the house when she is not in it. "And here is a drizzle come on, and there he will be sitting out in it, I know, if I don't go and drive him in."

Events justify the prediction. The good wife finds her husband sitting on the gate kicking his heels quite contented and peaceable, only he would not pay the house the compliment of going into it when she was not there. He told her once he looked on it as no better

* Sophia Woodroffe.

than a coal-hole when she was not shining up and down it. *N.B.*—They have been some years married. A calm but very tender conjugal love sits at this innocent hearth.

George has made a great concession for an Englishman He has solemnly deposited, before witnesses, his sobriquet of "Unlucky George," not (he was careful to explain) because he found the great nugget, nor because the meadow he bought in Bathurst for two hundred pounds has just been sold by Robinson for twelve thousand pounds, but on account of his being Susan's husband.

And Susan is very happy. Besides the pleasure of loving and being loved, she is in her place in creation. The class of women (a very large one) to which she belongs, comes into the world to make others happy. Susan is skilful at this and very successful. She makes everybody happy round her, "and that is *so* pleasant." She makes the man she loves happy, and that is delightful.

My reader shall laugh at her; my unfriendly critic shall sneer at her. As a heroine of a novel she deserves it; but I hope, for their own sakes, neither will undervalue the original in their passage through life. These average women are not the spice of fiction, but they are the salt of real life.

William Fielding is godfather to Susan's little boy.

He can stand by his brother's side and look without compunction on Anne Fielding's grave, and think without an unmanly shudder of his own.